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SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM:

A STUDY OF CORE FRENCH STUDENTS' ABILITY TO ASSESS THEIR OWN PROFICIENCY

BY

LISA CAOUETTE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 1990

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Self-Assessment in the Second Language Classroom: A Study of Core French Students' Ability To Assess Their Own Proficiency" submitted by Lisa Caouette in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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Date September 28, 1990.

ESPECIALLY DEDICATED TO:

My husband, family and friends who were always giving me their support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This study involved 272 students enrolled in a French as a second language Core French Program from Grades 4 to 12 in a small urban school district. The study focused on students' ability to assess their proficiency in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The test instrument used to assess their proficiency was a self-assessment questionnaire based on communicative tasks relating to student experiences. Their perceptions were validated by the use of two test instruments. For the listening and speaking skills an Oral Interview in French was administered. The reading and writing skills were validated by a three part Cloze section and one free response question. A second component of the study was to focus on students' attitudes towards the use of self-assessment procedures in the second language classroom. To determine these feelings a

five question interview in English was administered.

The above procedures produced the following findings:

1. As students progress along a continuum of growth which encompasses their development cognitively chronologically and emotionally, they become more accurate in their ability to assess their proficiency in the four language skills.
2. Younger students exhibit more difficulty in their ability to assess their proficiency than do older students, which may be a consquence of their cognitive immaturity, whereas older students tend to underestimate their abilities.
3. The students' ability to assess their proficiency appears to be contingent on the amount of emphasis the skill is given in the classroom.
4. Girls were found to be better at assessing their proficiency than were boys, especially in reading comprehension in French

5. Students are positive towards a self-assessment procedure as it provided them with valuable information on their learning, as well as demonstrating their strengths and weaknesses.

Futher, this research demonstrates the need for long term study of self-assessment procedures in order to determine its affects.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background to the Study

In the past ten years considerable research has been dedicated to the study of the communicative use of a second language (Savignon, 1972, 1983; Canale and Swain,1980). This philosophical change came about as a result of pressure by the public which viewed students coming out of second language programs as nonproficient and incapable of using the second language in situations demanding more than minimal fluency. This call for change led to the development of such concepts as communicative competence (Savignon,1972,1983; Rivers,1983; Brumfit, 1979) and the proficiency-based curriculum (Higgs,1982,1984; James, 1985; Omaggio,1984,1986). It was hoped that by implementing these concepts in the classroom, students would be more capable of applying the language to communicative situations and thus be more proficient.

The concepts of communicative competence and proficiency have been, up to now, considered as possible approaches for the second language classroom, but have yet to be applied on a full scale basis in the French as a Second Language classroom setting. This is evident by the work of theorists involved in the National Core French Study (1989) who have demonstrated a need for second language education to go beyond the grammatical framework of the language. They have proposed an approach that is experentially based which attempts to assist the acquisition of the second language by drawing upon the students' skills and knowledge already developed in their maternal language. In this way, it is believed that students will become more proficient and be able to communicate effectively. However, this approach is also theoretically based and has yet to be put into practice in the second language classroom.

The dilemma arises when one wishes to assess student proficiency, in French as a Second Language, based on the assumption that these innovative approaches are being applied to the classroom setting. To ensure that these changes are in fact occurring, a means by which they can be monitored and a way of establishing their degree of success is required. The following study is an attempt, then, to address this situation and to suggest a possible solution to this problem.

Self-Assessment as a Means of Determining One's Proficiency

Evaluation has always been a part of education. It involves judging either one's own or another's performance in terms of general or specific tasks. Such evaluations can be either formative or summative in nature. The former type of evaluation can occur at any given point during the learning process while the latter represents a cumulation of judgements of a learner's progress. Nevertheless, evaluations do not just take place in educational settings. They are performed constantly in society and are a frame of reference from which we, as individuals, both understand ourselves and place ourselves within the social framework. Most frequently, evaluation usually leads to changes in a process or to an existing situation in a person's life.

In society, the most common forms of evaluation are those carried out by "others". These "others" are often given the title of "expert" and are afforded status in society. Consequently, we accept these judgements as being "correct". As a result of these judgements, we assume our designated position in society.

However, at the same time as we allow others to judge us, we, too, judge ourselves. We term this process **self-assessment or self-evaluation**. Self-evaluation involves a deeper, self-conscious process that requires one to look at oneself within the social or operational framework and to decide consciously where s/he wishes/wants to fit within this framework. This, too, is a continuous process as one develops his/her place in society, not only in the educational system, but in the workplace as well.

In education, the classroom is in every sense a microcosm of the real world. Here, too, evaluation plays a key role in how students view themselves and place themselves within the classroom framework. The "expert" here is the teacher, where students view themselves according to the teacher's judgements.

The second language classroom is no different. In fact, more than in other subject areas, it is probable that in the second language classroom students use only the teacher's frame(s) of reference as a means of determining how well or how poorly they are performing in the second language. Not only is the feedback that they receive given to them only by the teacher, but it comes most often in the form of discrete point dissections of their linguistic knowledge of the language, not their global ability to *use* the language. Hence, they come to rely heavily on this form of evaluation. This does not mean that students are not evaluating themselves; rather, seldom are they asked to *trust* their personal judgements about their own capabilities.

In essence, then, the purpose of the present study is to determine how well students are able to judge their own performance in French as a Second Language. The questions to which this study will attempt to find answers are as follows: (1) are students able to assess their own ability to comprehend and utilize the language in a variety of communicative situations, i.e., use *self-assessment* to evaluate their proficiency in the four major skill areas of aural comprehension, oral communication (production), reading, and writing? and (2) are students themselves consciously aware of their own level of ability in the second language?

It may be that students are aware subconsciously of their own linguistic, communicative, and sociolinguistic skills. If this is so, this subconscious knowledge should be raised to the students' conscious level. Through this conscience raising process students may then have another frame of reference from which to evaluate their ability to function in the target language.

Rationale for the Study

Self-assessment in the second language field has been limited to studies of adults learning a second language (Oskarsson, 1981, 1978; LeBlanc and Painchaud, 1985, 1981; von Elek,1982, 1981; Achara, 1981) either for immigration reasons (Oskarsson, von Elek) or for university purposes (LeBlanc and Painchaud, Achara). However, in the Canadian context and more specifically in the Alberta situation, the vast majority of students studying a second language are doing so as a part of their elementary and secondary school education. Such study serves a school requirement, may meet the needs of some future endeavour, or fulfills a personal need to learn the language. Children, like adults, need to know how well they can function in the target language, but, without some frame of reference to guide this knowledge, they have no realistic standard on which to evaluate their own performance. As part of the present study it is hoped that students will be helped to raise to conscious level the knowledge which they may have about their ability to function in the target language.

Statement of the Problem

This study will focus on the question "How accurately are students of a French as a Second Language (FSL) Program able to self-assess their proficiency in the four language skills, i.e., aural comprehension, oral communication (production), reading, and writing?" The study will attempt to relate the students' self- assessment to the categories contained in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Several general questions are important to this study. By using the students' assessments can we now apply a proficiency level to their communicative abilities? If so, do the student-generated levels match face-to-face test validations of the students' self-assessments? If the students' assessments are accurate, what implications does this have for the classroom, for classroom testing, and for the students' individual needs as they pertain to their acquisition of the second language? If the students are inaccurate, does this mean that we, as teachers, must teach our students as part of the second language curriculum how to monitor their own proficiency?

Purpose of the Study

The study has three major goals:

1. To determine the ability of students to assess

accurately their proficiency in the four language skill areas;

2. To examine students' attitudes towards self-assessment as a of better understanding their knowledge and use of the language assessing their own proficiency; and
3. To determine the implications self-assessment has for the second language classroom.

Significance of the Study

An exploration of students' ability to assess their own proficiency in a second language context is significant because the process requires students to analyze critically what they are capable and/or incapable of doing. This evaluative process also requires an individual to be honest with him/herself and to evaluate him/herself within a frame of reference that is of relevance to him/her. From a pedagogical perspective, self-evaluation can provide teachers with useful information which will allow them to have a better global understanding of the students' perception of the level at which they are performing at present as well as to provide the teacher with a more flexible means of determining the needs and abilities of the students. Finally, it is through this research that one may be able to determine the role of self-assessment in the classroom.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are essential for comprehending the study:

1. Proficiency deals with an individual's ability to use the second language in a global context as opposed to the ability to manipulate discrete grammatical components.
2. An Oral Interview is a test situation in which an individual's ability to express him/herself correctly in a variety of communicative contexts is assessed.
3. Communicative Competence, as defined by Sandra Savignon (1983, 1972),

a) Requires the negotiating of meaning between the speaker(s) and receiver(s) of the message, since communication is a process which is dynamic rather than static;

b) Stresses that *communicative competence* is not only an oral phenomenon but is a written one as well;

c) Requires that the language user will adapt his/her skills, be they aural, oral, written or reading, according to the context; i.e.,s/he will vary the language use with regard to register and style;

d) Distinguishes the difference between *competence* and *performance*. *Competence* is the knowedge one has of the target language. *Performance* is what the user does with the language.

Within the framework of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980, 1983) have defined four components which they perceive are akin to Savignon's initial definition. These four concepts are:

A. Grammatical competence or **linguistic**

competence represents the speakers' ability to use the linguistic stuctures of the language; i.e., its phonology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics.

B. **Sociolinguistic competence** refers to the speaker's ability to apply correctly the linguistic structures of the target language in a manner appropriate for the social context involved.

C. **Discourse competence** is where an individual demonstrates the ability to use the language in smooth, clear native-like delivery (termed cohesion) while using correct transitions, (termed coherence thought) vocabulary, etc., in order to convey the message on any topic.

D. **Strategic competence** deals with the language user's ability to compensate for gaps or lags in communication. This includes the ability to paraphrase, use circumlocution, gestures and other paralinguistic features. However, it must be noted that as the individual becomes more proficient the less s/he relies on these strategies.

4. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are a set of criteria which determine the various levels through which an individual passes as s/he becomes more proficient in using the language. The Guidelines, essentially, delineate the various skills that an individual should have mastered in order to move to the next level. The scale ranges from 0 - 5, where 0 = no language ability, 1 = intermediate language ability, 2 = advanced, 3-4 superior and 5 = native speaker ability. (This scale has been modified by the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education for use in Alberta. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of the ACTFL guidelines.)

Assumptions

Owing to the nature of the study, it must be assumed that:

1) the students are capable of filling out a self-assessment questionnaire;

2) the students will be honest with themselves when they fill

out the self-assessment questionnaire;

3) students are able to assess their own work;

4) students are capable of reading in English; and

5) interviewers can be trained appropriately.

Delimitations

1) The sample size will be limited to students from a small urban Alberta School Board who are presently enrolled in the French as a Second Language Program in Grades 4 to 12.

2) Students involved in the immersion program will not be assessed.

3) The language being assessed is French. However, an English interview will be administered as a means of gathering qualitative data.

4) The self-assessment questionnaire is based on communicative situations as opposed to discrete point grammer questions.

5) Since the self-assessment instrument and the aural/oral and reading/writing validation tests were designed for this

study, these instruments will not have undergone any previous validation other than in the piloting of the instruments.

Limitations

1) The results may not be generalizable to other school systems, since the experimental site is a small, urban district.
2) The applicability of the self-assessment process may not be generalizable to other languages or to bilingual/immersion language programs.
3) The self-assessment questionnaire may only be used as a rough placement test since it is biased by the students' own perceptions as to what they "feel" they can do.
4) The study is limited to students in Grades 4 to 12.

Thesis Organization

This chapter has briefly described the rationale, the problem, definitions, the assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the self-assessment study of Core French students from Grades 4 - 12. The remainder of the thesis will be organized in the following fashion. Chapter Two will describe the literature that is relevant to this study. Chapter Three will discuss the procedure undertaken and how the data was analyzed. Chapter Four will discuss the statistical and qualitative data derived from the findings. Chapter Five will present a summary of the findings and the implications which this research may have for educational practices in the French as a Second Language Program and for further educational research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

What is Proficiency in a Second Language?

The call for proficiency has risen from the public's disenchantment with students' inability to use their second language skills in real life communicative situations. This has lead to the recent development of what is termed a proficiency-based curriculum (Higgs, 1984; Omaggio, 1984, 1986; James, 1985; Galloway, 1987; et al) which focuses on determining the various levels of competency a learner must pass through as s/he attempts to become more proficient in the target language. The evolution of this curriculum stems from the work done by Sandra Savignon in 1972 in which she developed the concept of communicative competence. In essence, her definition of communicative ability entails: 1) the negotiation of meaning between an interlocuter and locuter, either orally and in written form, 2) the adaptability of the language user to the sociolinguistic requirements of the context, such as style and register, and 3) the ability to distinguish between performance and competence, the former relating to language use and the latter to language knowledge. Canale and Swain (1980) have expanded the concept of communicative competence to include the following components: grammatical competence - the ability to use the linguistic structures of the language, sociolinguistic competence - the ability to apply correctly the linguistic structures of the language according to the context, discourse competence - the ability to use the language in a cohesive and coherent manner in an attempt to develop and deliver long sequences of thought, and strategic competence - the use of a variety of strategies, verbal or nonverbal to compensate for gaps or lags in communication as a result of an insufficient command of the language on the part of one or both of the communicators. Thus, communicative competence requires the ability to negotiate and to adapt one's linguistic knowledge to the context by correctly applying register, paralinguistics, and any other factors that pertain to the completion of a communicative act so that it replicates, as much as possible, native-like speech.

It is this negotiating and adapting process that constitutes one's proficiency. Basically, proficiency deals with a person's ability to use the language in a global context as opposed to the ability to manipulate discrete elements of the language. In order to state more clearly what proficiency means the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) developed a set of guidelines in the early 1980s as a means of addressing this issue. According to Galloway (1987), these guidelines are concerned with observable behaviours which demonstrate how an individual can take his/her lingusitic abilities and communicate in a spontaneous situation which is free from classroom cues and corrections. Proficiency is viewed, then, as how well one is able to apply the four components of communicative competence as defined by Canale and Swain. The guidelines provide a description of the kinds of things a student should be able to do at a given level and specifically for the four basic language skills of aural comprehension, oral production, reading, and writing. For example, at the novice or beginning level, the student should be able to use memorised phrases and words in order to get his/her intention across. However, flexiblity and spontaneity of speech are very limited owing to the limited communicative ability of the student. On the other hand, as students progresse through the levels, they are able to be more flexible in the kinds of things they can do with the language. They demonstrate the ability to use wider forms of communication and begin to show cohesion and coherence of thought as they negotiate their intents and/or meanings. As students continue to progress through the levels, they become more proficient in the target language. In this sense, language acquisition is seen as a cyclical process, whereby the students' knowledge of the target language constantly becomes more refined as they develop their proficiency.

This refining process is termed accuracy and is, in essence, one of the features that distinguishes communicative competence from proficiency, as perceived by ACTFL studies (Higgs, 1982; Omaggio,1984, 1986; et al). In other words, it is not enough to consider a language user as being communicatively competent; rather, one must also determine the "precision" (Higgs, 1982) with which the person can apply his/her linguistic, socio-linguistic, paralinguistic and cultural knowledge to the context. The manner in which this is done will determine the person's proficiency level.

Thus, the guidelines developed by ACTFL, FSI (Foreign Service Institute) and ETS (Educational Teaching Service) represent an attempt to describe a global means of determining what a student should be able to do with the language at various levels. These guidelines attempt to describe language ability in global performance terms rather than assessing the students' acquisition of discrete grammatical points. The question now arises as to how does one determine a learner's proficiency?

How can Proficiency be assessed?

Since proficiency deals more with the flexibility of language use than with the acquisition of discrete grammatical points of the language, the testing procedures that can be applied to this context must reflect the same intent. Two very common procedures used to assess proficiency are the Oral Proficiency Interview (an ACTFL testing procedure) which evaluates the student's aural comprehension and oral production and the Cloze test which most often assesses a student's reading ability. The two procedures both evaluate, in global terms, the student's ability to use the language by allowing for a variety of ways to interact with the language of assessment. The questions which now arise are, "What are these two procedures and what are the implications for their use in assessing proficiency?"

Oral Proficiency Interview

The Oral Proficiency Interview has gone through an historical development that dates back to the early 1950's when the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), dissatisfied with its current testing procedures of military and foreign service personnel, decided to embark on the development of a "meaningful" evaluative procedure (Clark and Clifford, 1988) which would clearly determine the ability of a language learner to function abroad in a given situation. This approach was further developed and refined over the course of the next thirty years by such institutions as the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). A consequence of this was the development of a procedure that would attempt to evaluate, in an interview situation, the general communicative ability of the language learner as it applied to a variety of potential contexts.

The essence of the interview, developed mainly by ETS, is a face-to-face conversation of approximately 10 to 40 minutes duration, which is recorded and validated by two trained interviewers, one of whom actually does the interview while the other takes copious notes during the process. The entire interview consists of four separate phases (Clark and Clifford, 1988). The first phase is the *warm-up* or *conversational* phase which takes up the first few minutes of the interview and is meant to put the examinee at ease, while at the same time obtaining a rough estimate of the examinee's general language abilities. This aspect of the interview consists of statements, direct and indirect questions which are initiated by the interviewer and responded to by the examinee. The second phase consists of a series of probes "...in which the pace and level of sophistication of the discourse are intentionally raised in order to determine the examinee's ability or lack of ability to perform at a higher level." (Clark and Clifford, 1988, p. 138) This phase of the interview is done in a role-playing fashion whereby the situations are predetermined by the interviewer. This phase is followed by *level* checks that are used intermittently throughout the interview in order to confirm if the examinee has in fact attained a certain proficiency level. This is accomplished by widening the contextual and topical bases so as to demonstrate that the examinee is indeed performing at this level. The final phase is a *wind-down* period which is used to allow the examinee a sense of success in the interview by reverting back to the level where s/he demonstrated the most effective communicative ability. The recorded data is then evaluated by the interviewers and a proficiency rating is allocated to the examinee.

As with any test instrument there are limitations which should be noted when employing the item. A number of researchers in the field, among whom are Savignon (1985) and Lantolf and Frawley (1985), have raised some of the issues regarding the limitations of this procedure. The principal critique lies with the original guidelines and the manner in which they are written. According to Omaggio (1986, p. 309), the guidelines provide a "means of measuring *absolute* proficiency". This absolute proficiency that is actually defined in statements for each level is based on linguistic accuracy related to the phonology, the lexicon and the morphological and syntactic aspects of the target language which would be performed at a certain level. According to Lantolf and Fawley (1985, p.341), "the guidelines are. . . the constructions of theorists and they prescribe what a speaker ought to be able to do", not what a speaker can do which would be based on sound empirical evidence (Lantolf and Frawley). As a result, one must be very cautious when using the guidelines in the validation process, i.e., the guidelines should be used as the starting point from which one can begin to assess the proficiency level of the learner, rather than representing the absolute proficiency that the learner has attained.

Secondly, according to Raffaldini (1988), the number of discourse contexts is also limited, with the functions, i.e., the language-use tasks, at each level, being clearly defined in terms of expected performance outcomes. However, given the circumstances of the interview procedure, it is highly unlikely that any more than the given contexts could be discussed owing to the limited nature of the procedure and the fact that the procedure is in and of itself an artifical situation which resembles hypothetical constructs of reality. Nevertheless, what is important here is the fact that the interview process is limited in what it can actually test, since only a small sample of an examinee's abilities will be obtained. It is important to realize that this small sample will give the interviewer only a global idea of what learners are capable of doing, rather than stating that they have attained an absolute proficiency level. Bearing these limitations in mind, then, the postive aspect of this procedure is the fact that a sample of learners' abilities can be used to assess, in general terms, their aural comprehension and oral communicative ability.

Cloze Tests

A very popular procedure for testing reading proficiency is the Cloze test. The term "cloze" is a derivation of the word "closure" which originated from Gestalt psychology which "describe[s] a process of completing geometric figures from partial representations." (Meyer and Tetrault, 1986, p. 409). The cloze test, then, entails the "closing" of ideas or expressions by filling in the gap. Its popularity has arisen not only because of its potential for objective scoring , but most importantly, because it is considered to be an integrative procedure rather than a discrete point test since it draws upon the learner's " . . . grammatical, semantic and rhetorical knowledge" (Hanania and Shikhani, 1986, p. 99). In this sense, this type of procedure is seen as more communicative in nature, since it requires students to use their entire knowledge of the language in order to determine the interrelationships among content, context, and the missing lexical items. According to Laesch and van Kleek (1987, p. 174), " the cloze test has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of overall second language proficiency in both adults (Darnell, 1968; Stubbs and Tucker, 1974; Oller and Hirofotis, 1980) and children (Swain, Lapkin and Barik, 1976; Ojerinde, 1980)." Therefore, it appears to be a strong indicator of a learner's reading proficiency.

Typically there are two types of Cloze tests: the random cloze which has every nth word omitted and the rational cloze where the test designer decides which words are to be omitted. According to Bensoussan and Ramraz (1984) the rational cloze is the better of the two, since the procedure provides the test designer with greater freedom in deciding on both the gaps and the varied reponses as well as allowing the test to be tailored for the specific needs of the designer. In this regard, they have chosen to call this test a "fill in" test to avoid confusion with other cloze tests.

Inherent in most cloze tests is the fact that "Cloze exercises are usually based on real texts, one or more paragraphs long, with the beginning and the end of the text left intact and deletions in between" (Meyer and Tetrault, 1986, p. 410) Because these texts tend to be authentic documents there are three levels of meaning that can be derived from any given text. According to Bensoussan and Ramraz (1984, p. 231), these three levels of meaning are as follows:

1) the **micro-level**, focusing on the lexical choice of words and their interaction with other words in context;
2) the **pragmatic level**, which is extra-textual and draws on the reader's general knowledge of the world; and
3) the **macro-level**, dealing with the functions of the sentences and the structure of the text as a whole.

Therefore, when choosing which items to delete, one must realize that those test items that are at a micro-level will assess the learner's comprehension of the word and those items at the macro-level will evaluate coherence of the more general items within the text. The pragmatic level will be based on whether or not the learner has had experience with this type of text or not. Thus, the way in which one chooses the gaps is based on the notion that the text must have sufficient redundancy to permit a proficient reader to predict the missing word or appropriate expression. The order of preference for choosing the blanks, then, is to choose those words or expressions which test: 1) general comprehension such as function words or cohesive markers and 2) content words that can serve the purpose of distractors. Consequently, this process will allow for easier and more objective assessments of reading proficiency to be made.

Nevertheless, there are disadvantages to the use of Cloze tests. One of the more serious problems with the Random Cloze Test is the fact that "even though omitting every nth word may give the test designer a random sample of the text, it still will not give direct information on whether examinees know specific words or phrases in the the text " (Bensoussan and Ramraz, 1984, p.231). This arises from the fact that the Random Cloze does not take into account cohesion and context when the words are deleted, leaving examinees with the difficulty of having to employ added strategies to the task. On the other hand, the difficulty with the Rational Cloze is that the marking is awkward and often time consuming. Nevertheless, this is offset by the fact that there is a choice given between the words deleted and the length between the gaps which would allow for cohesion and content to be left intact, ensuring that examinees would be demonstrating their knowledge of the language. Therefore, their problems are more practical issues then theoretical ones, as noted with the Oral Proficiency Interview.

The two procedures described above - the Oral Proficiency Interview and the Cloze test - deal with two possible means of assessing proficiency. Their strength lies in the fact that they are proven procedures which provide general information about a person's proficency. Needless to say, as with any testing procedure, they are limited in what they can evaluate. The most important issue to note here, though, is the fact that another person is making the assessment. In this vein, the question now arises as to whether or not an individual can assess his/her own proficiency? It is this question that the final section of this chapter, and the study itself, will attempt to address.

What is Self-Assessment?

Self-assessment, from a psychological perspective, is a process that occurs constantly in the daily life of a person. It allows one to determine his/her position in society and in the workplace in relation to others.

According to Higgens, Strauman and Klein:

> Sherif (1936) and Lewin (1951) stated that judgements and experiences of success and failure take place within some frame of reference, where the frame of reference can be the interiorization of the norms and values of one's culture, the achievements of others', one's own level of aspiration (i.e. one's personal goals), or one's own past performance. (1986, p. 25)

Thus, the self-assessment process is a vital means of evaluation because it allows a person to use personal criteria to determine his/her successes or failures in society.

In social membership, there are two basic groups (Higgens, Strauman and Klein, 1986). In a comparison group, the individual compares him/herself to the rest of the membership. This is known as the perceptual standard. The second group consists of those individuals who define the realms of "acceptability" or "propriety" of one's behaviour. This group is normsetting and normforcing and is referred to as the motivational standard (ibid). Also, within this group are those individuals who are upheld as a measure for self-assessment by an individual "either because the individual is salient or emotionally significant in one's life like a close [relative] or because the individual's attributes permit a valid assessment of one's ability [like a sports hero or an excellent teacher] (Goethals & Darby, 1977)." (op. cit., p. 25) These groups provide an individual frame of reference for determining how well the individual fits into the society.

Higgens, Strauman, and Klein claim that there are four basic reference points for self-assessment. These are: 1) social category, 2) meaningful other, 3) autobiographical, and 4) social context. Social category defines the "average performance or attributes (e.g. mean, median, modal, prototypical) of the members of some social category or group". (op. cit., p. 26) In other words, individuals assess themselves according to the "average" standing of the group. The "meaningful other" reference point discerns "the performance of another individual who is meaningful to the evaluator either because of the relevance or appropriateness of the individual's attributes for social comparison...or because of his or her emotional significance or importance to the evaluator". (op. cit., p. 27) The interesting aspect of this reference point is that the person with whom the individual is comparing him/herself may or may not be alive and the individual may or may not be personally acquainted with this "meaningful other".

The autobiographical reference is a definition of the individual's past and includes both his/her performance or attributes. This reference can relate to a single incident or can be a series of incidences, either recent or remote, that will affect the individual's assessment of him/herself. This reference point is used most commonly by children.

The final reference point is the social context. This reference is "defined by the performance or attributes of the immediate context of people to whom the evaluator is currently exposed (and notices). " (op. cit., p. 28). Children in the lower grades of elementary school tend to evaluate their performance on the basis both of the immediate context and also on what their peers have to say about their performance, which is also contextually based (Higgens, Strauman, and Klein, 1986). Thus it is these very references, according to the authors just cited, which determine, in many ways, the manner in which individuals view themselves as members of their society.

Turning more specifically to education, researchers in this field have been interested in self-assessment as a means of evaluating student progress and in determining students' maturation processes. For example, the concept of self-assessment has been studied in both Physical Education and Educational Psychology. An article written by Horn and Hasbrook, entitled "Psychological Characteristics and the Criteria Children Use for Self-Evaluation" (1987) suggests that children participating in sports activities view themselves with respect to how they are able to carry out the sport as opposed to their peers. According to Horn and Hasbrook:

> Several writers (e.g., Harter, 1981a; Roberts, 1984) have suggested that the assessment or judgements children form concerning their personal competencies significantly affect not only their performance but also such achievement behaviours as motivation, task persistence, anxiety, and affective reactions to performance. (p. 208)

This information has proven to be very valuable in understanding why children often behave the way they do under certain conditions. Further research in the fields of psychology and sport sciences has also shown that the variability in the way children perceive their competence can be due to a number of factors. The research in these two areas has shown that, "Young children, preschoolers and kindergarteners, base their competence judgements primarily on simple task mastery (i.e., successful completion of a task) and/or on the feedback of significant adults [eg. parents, elder siblings, and/or teachers] (Pascuzzi, 1981; Spear & Armstrong, 1978; Stipek & Tannatt, 1984)." (op. cit. p. 209) However, it has also been noted that as the children mature they tend to lean more towards the acceptance of peer evaluations than of the evaluations of a significant adult. In fact, it is felt that this tendency possibly reaches "its highest intensity during late childhood and early adolescence (Cooks & Stingle, 1974; Horn & Hasbrook, 1986; Kagen & Madsen, 1972)." (op. cit., p. 209) Thus, as children move closer to adolescence they tend to assimilate both forms, the significant other and peer assessments, into their own evaluation of personal competencies (Horn & Hasbrook, 1987).

In a further contribution to this discussion, Horn and Hasbrook cite two studies [Harter (1981) and Weiss, Bredemeir, and Shewchuck (1985)] which support the notion of "age-related internalization" (term by Horn & Hasbrook). These studies have shown that as children mature cognitively they tend to rely less on external information such as teacher feedback, test results, and reports and more on greater internal criteria in assessing their competencies. However, as Horn and Hasbrook point out, this internal development can also depend on the experience which the child has had with developing this "internal criteria". According to Harter (as cited by Horn and Hasbrook), if the experience has been positive and has produced some degree of success, i.e., by receiving "encouraging and contingent feedback from signficant adults in response to those performance attempts, [these children] should develop a positive perception of their competencies and a belief that they can control future performance outcomes." (op. cit., p. 210) However, should the experience be one of "low perception of their competence" (ibid), there is a greater possibility that the student will be unable to develop internal criteria and will become ultimately more dependent on external sources for determining their competencies. Thus, research in this area suggests "that the sources of information children use to evaluate their competence are associated with, and perhaps are a function of, their perceptions of competence and their beliefs concerning their ability to control performance outcomes". (op. cit., p.

219) Thus, this information has been very fruitful in providing education with an understanding of how students perceive their abilities, be these academic and/or physical.

This research has been useful in describing the results that have been obtained in the study of self-assessment in general. The following section will now look at the kinds of research which have been done specifically in the field of second languages.

Research in Self-Assessment in the Second Language Context

Many studies have been undertaken in this area in an attempt to determine the applicability of self-assessment in the field of second language education. However, the focus of most of this research has been in the area of adult education and has not dealt directly with school aged children, which unfortunately has limited its value. Nevertheless, in an attempt to determine what has been done in the field of self-assessment, Oskarsson, in 1984, reviewed the literature in order to ascertain what has and has not been done in this area. In general, he found that most studies dealt with adults and were centered on the use of self-assessment instruments as a form of autonomous evaluation.

He cited the Heidt study (1979), a previous review of the research literature done in the second language field, which emphasized "the purposes of assessment, justification of self-assessment and the qualifications of assessors (page 2)" (Oskarsson, 1984, p. 7) and to a lesser degree, how these are applicable to other educational contexts such as teacher education, formal classroom instruction, adult education, and distance education. Oskarsson found little empirical evidence to support Heidt's findings. However, Heidt stated that:

> Although self-evaluation, self-control, and self-assessment are frequently mentioned in recent educational literature and although it is common practice today to include self-evaluation opportunities in instructional materials, there is no equivalent research to date as to the effects of the effectiveness of such self-assessment opportunities. It has not been possible to identify a single report focusing on practical

> experiences in the field and the existing relevant empirical studies are almost a negligible quantity. (op. cit., p. 7)

Heidt's study looked more at what textbooks were offering students in terms of self-assessment than at the actual procedure itself. His conclusion was that, since we know very little about the effectiveness of self-assessment, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not these procedures are, in effect, useful, or if in fact, they are worthy of the student's time.

Oskarsson's second citation involved his own 1978 work for the Modern Languages Project sponsored by the Council of Europe in 1977-78. The main purpose of his study was "to a certain extent to try out a possible form of self-assessment for use in adult learning" (op.cit., p. 8) as well as to describe the other kinds of related research. Since the goal of the Modern Language Project was focused around student-centered learning and self-motivation in second language learning, he attempted to use the research as a means of better understanding these two concepts. His review of the literature demonstrated that:

> Most of the practical activities in the field involved self-administration of traditional tests, mostly so called discrete-point tests focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. There seemed to be few attempts at trying to develop learners' ability to assess their oral skills. (op.cit., p. 8)

As a means of overcoming this problem, he suggested the development of instruments that would assess not only one's overall language proficiency, but also more specific skills which were based on objectives, such as those of the Threshold Level[1] (Oskarsson, 1978) or those based on everyday situations, along the lines of the functional/notional approach (Wilkens, 1978) . At the same time a general rating scale was developed for the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - in order to assess global acquisition. He had students assess their own ability, using real-life situations, in order to determine the utility of self-assessment. As a control, he used teacher judgements and test scores to correlate the results. His findings showed that there was a high correlation between students' self-ratings and those attained through formal procedures. However, he was also quick to note that sufficient practice in this process was most important in obtaining valid results.

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[1] The Threshold Level (a concept developed by the Council of Europe in 1975) is a list of linguistic inventories and its accompanying exponents, i.e., functions, notions, and lexicon, that have been deemed necessary in order to communicate in the target language at a general ability level. As the tasks become more specific and/or specified the learner is required to surpass the Threshold Level in order to fulfill the needs of the situation. (Hawkins, 1987)

Oskarsson cites another study done by Raasch (1979- 80) which was similar to his own. Raasch's research question revolved around "the relationship between the adult learners' conceptions of their own language skills and the formal test results that the same learners obtain when they sit for an exam or certificate." (op. cit., p.100). Raasch compared a French exam to the answers obtained in a questionnaire designed to determine students' perceptions of their language ability in certain situations. He found that:

1. there was a greater difference in students' perceptions of their receptive skills (listening and reading) than was the case with their perception of their production skills (speaking and writing) when compared to formal test scores;
2. students were more perceptive about the level of their oral proficiency than of their proficiency in the written language;
3. many students demonstrated uncertainty with regard to their ability to pronounce the language. When compared with formal test scores, it was found that many students underestimated their pronunciation skills, and
4. "almost half the number of candidates made accurate assessments of their own ability levels." (op. cit., p. 11)

In his conclusion, he included a recommendation that a self-assessment procedure be implemented as "a regular feature of the language courses" (op. cit. p. 11) as a means of allowing students to learn how to determine their own areas of improvement and as a way of increasing student motivation.

Ferguson (1978) used two tests of self-assessment to examine oral skills which were compared to "standardized measures of oral expression". (op. cit., p. 11) His first test consisted of a list of 35 questions in which the students checked the "yes" box if they could do what the question asked. An example of this type of question was "Can you order a simple meal?". The second test involved the students ranking their oral production skills in comparison to prerecorded samples of other students. These samples were on a graded scale which determined what language proficiency level had been attained. The results obtained in this study seemed to demonstrate that good students tended to underestimate their abilities, whereas less proficient learners tended to overestimate.

Windeatt's study (1981) was based on the individualized instruction model in which students teach themselves the second language. He used a questionnaire which described situations that were general in nature to determine their ability to use the English language. Students were asked to assess their ability to function in these situations using a scale from 10 - 1 where 10 signified "almost everything" and 1 "almost nothing". This questionnaire was used at both the beginning and conclusion of the course in conjunction with formal tests and interviews as a means of measuring "the students' own assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in the language." (op. cit., p. 14) In essence, he found that:

1. the only ones who encountered problems with the questionnaire were those who were already weak in English;
2. it caused some students to become "irritated" by the procedure, because they perceived evaluation to be the teacher's task and not their own, whereas others appreciated the chance to express their own feelings about their abilities;
3. based on test scores and teacher judgements, most students tended to overestimate their ability;
4. it was generally found that the students' ratings were higher at the end of the course than at the beginning;
5. students also tended to rate themselves lower in the area of pronunciation and other coursework related to the subject.

Although the results were somewhat negative in nature, there is value in this research in that it provides insight into the possible ways in wich students react to self-assessment procedures.

In a different approach for determining " the construct validity of tests of speaking and reading English as a second language" (op. cit., p. 14), Palmer and Bachman (1981) used a self-assessment procedure as one of three different means in their "multitrait-multimethod" study. They wanted to ascertain whether or not reading and speaking skills could be measured independently as separate "traits" of abilities. They also used a self-assessment process as one of the procedures because it was deemed to be an easy and adaptable measure of the reading and speaking skills. They also used an oral interview and an oral translation procedure to make up the secondary and tertiary aspects of the study.

The self-assessment questionnaires themselves were written in the native language of the students, in this case Mandarin, and consisted of two different question formats: one was based on what the students could do in English, such as dealing with native speakers or using cohesion of thought, and the other was geared more to the linguistic aspects of the language such as lexicon, syntax, and grammatical knowledge. Since the goal of the study was centered more around the question of reading and speaking as separate skills, the results of the study were not discussed by Oskarsson. However, he mentioned that Bachman and Palmer did find "that the reliability measures (Guttman's lambda and alpha coefficients) were slightly lower for the self-rating method than for some of the other method units (subtests) and equal to others". (op. cit., p. 15)

In another study by Palmer and Bachman (1981) similar results were obtained. This time their study focused on three components ("traits"): grammatical competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. (Op. cit., p. 15) Four methods were used in order to collect data: 1) a variety of writing tasks, 2) a multiple choice method, 3) an interview method, similar to the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) Oral Proficiency Interview, and 4) a self-assessment method which was comprised of 24 test items ranked on a 4-point scale. The test items on the self-assessment asked that the students "rate their ability, difficulty, deficiency, etc. in each of the trait areas". (Op.cit., p.15) Again the subjects were of non-English background and represented 18 different languages. This time their results demonstrated that "there was strong evidence that the self-assessment technique yielded quite consistent and homogenous results". (Ibid, p. 15)

Riet Evers also used a self-assessment procedure in an experiment which she conducted in 1979 at the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in Holland. Her instrument contained subsections which measured three skills: aural comprehension, oral production, and reading comprehension. The questionnaire asked the subjects to rate themselves on a 7-point Lickert-scale from *très bien* (very good) to *très mal* (very weak). Two different types of questions were asked: ones which asked students to determine their general language skills, testing their perceptions of their language ability (global questionnaire) and the other, "measured the respondents' perceived mastery of the language in specified linguistic situations (situational questionnaire)." (op. cit., p. 16) The questionnaire was administered a second time in order to determine if the initial results were reliable. In essence, she found that there were "fairly high correlations between formal test results and self-assessment scores." (Ibid, p. 16) More specifically, the assessment demonstrated that:

> the subjects could more accurately assess their linguistic ability in relation to specifications of concrete communicative behaviour than in relation to general language skills (speaking, reading, etc.) and in relation to the formal properties of language use (grammar, pronunication, speaking, etc.). Further there was a tendency for the self-ratings of listening comprehension to correlate with the test than did the self-ratings of speaking and reading. (op. cit., p. 17)

The final results also showed that the subjects tended to underestimate their proficiency. This tendency was most obvious with the students at the higher levels of the language.

In Canada, at the University of Ottawa, LeBlanc and Painchaud (!981,1983,1984) studied the efficacy of a self-assessment instrument as a screening procedure for students entering the University of Ottawa for the first time. The research in 1981 was centered around the use of a self-assessment questionnaire based on the four language skills which was followed by a proficiency test. The self-assessment used a descriptive Likert scale, with 1 representing no language ability and 5 signifying that the student had no trouble at any time in completing the task. The test consisted of 40 test items with the entire test totaling 200 marks. This number was then correlated with the proficiency test score to determine the students' accuracy in determining their proficiency. LeBlanc and Painchaud found that their results matched very closely those obtained by Oskarsson (1978) in terms of the students' ability to assess accurately their target language knowledge.

However, LeBlanc and Painchaud felt that the study should be replicated in order to improve the test instrument so that more concise results could be obtained. [illegible] 1983, they decided to test two research questions: "1) Does the manner in which the statements are formulated regarding an identical task have an effect on the results? [and] 2) Can the results be improved by providing the students with instruments more closely related to their situation as potential second language users?" (LeBlanc, 1985, p. 60) Again, the same procedure was followed: first, the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire and second, the giving of the proficiency test, followed by the correlation of the two. However, instead of listing a number of activities that a student at the university might be able to do, the test instrument was designed around "blocks of items consisting of one general statement followed by five graded situations referring to the statement". (op. cit., p. 60) In other words, a general activity such as reading would be described, followed by five specific statements that dealt with reading. Then the students were to use the same Likert scale, mentioned above, in order to fill out the self-assessment questionnaire. There was a total of 50 items, 30 for listening and 20 for reading. In addition, two types of questionnaires were used as a means of determining the effects formatting the questionnaire would have on the results. One questionnaire was designed around the notion of "communicative description of the language" (op. cit., p. 60) while the other was based on real life situations that university students were most likely to encounter on the campus. The results showed that the correlation between a situational test instrument and a student's ability to assess his/her language ability can be improved when the test instrument takes into account the personal situation of the student. On the other hand, format did not have a bearing on the results obtained.

In 1983-84, the researchers felt that by replicating the study a third time, they might be able to eliminate the use of a proficiency exam and rely solely on the self-assessment questionnaire for student placement. This time the faculty staff were asked to write descriptors for listening and reading for the six proficiency levels that had been established. These were analysed and reconstructed for the questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of 60 items (36 - listening, 24 - reading) and a Likert scale of one to five. This time, however, the descriptors were shorter, such as "never", "always", "sometimes", and other similar terms. The questionnaire underwent two pilot trials before it was established as the official placement test for the university, based on the results obtained in the pilot test and in the previous studies.

Three separate studies in Hong Kong (Lee and Low, 1981; Low, 1982; Achara, 1980) also looked at the use of the self-assessment questionnaire as a means of assessing students' perceptions of their abilities. In the Lee and Low study, an attempt was made to have students fill out a self- assessment questionnaire upon the completion of a proficiency test. The questionnaire's purpose was three-fold: "a. to find out how the students rated their performance in the test, b. to find out to what degree perceived performance co-varied with willingness to follow supplementary courses in English, and c. to establish the validity of the type of tests being used...". (Oskarsson, p. 18) The results showed that the willingness of the students to continue in the English program correlated with the results they received on the proficiency test. They also found that students were able to make "'... positive judgements about the task validity of the test and ... were able to judge task validity independently of perception of their own performance on the test'". (op.cit., p. 18) In essence, the study demonstrated that students' perceptions of their abilities can be used to aid in the validation of a test instrument.

Achara's research involving university students reaffirmed many of the results that had come out of the previous Hong Kong studies. In his case, he found that "...students who placed themselves high on a 7-point self-rating language proficiency scale also achieved significantly higher formal test results than students who rated themselves low." (op.cit., p. 19) In this study students were given the "Rating Scale for Communicative Competence In English", with level 3 representing the "Threshold Level" as a guide for determining their proficiency. On the average, undergraduates rated themselves between levels 3 and 4 while graduate students rated themselves between levels 4 and 5. The results were then correlated with both formal tests and teachers' perceptions of the ability levels of the students. The results obtained were similar to those of other researchers, such as Bachman and Palmer for example (Oskarsson). However, the greatest surprise appeared to be with the match of the teachers' assessments with those of the students'. 58% of the estimations were identical. It is difficult to determine whether this finding favors a self-assessment procedure or demonstrates that the teachers' are better judges of students than the students themselves. In this vein, one must question the reliability of these results since it is not known what criteria the teachers' perceptions were based on. Further, according to Oskarsson, this and other data collected appeared to be somewhat suspect, since clarity in the design of the procedures and in the gathering of the data was lacking. Nevertheless, the research did provide some valuable insight into the possibility of teachers and students both being consciously aware of the students' abilities.

Research in self-assessment also has taken the form of the practical application of the method as a means of evaluation. At the Eurocentre Bournemouth Institute (Ferris, 1983; Holec, 1980) an attempt was made to use self-assessment as part of the daily routine in the second language classroom, such as evaluating one's own performance in a "real-life language situation" (Oskarsson), in evaluating one's verbal performance in a language laboratory (Ferris), or in evaluating one's performance in the classroom on task related work. The results, although not based on formal research procedures, indicate that by being encouraged to take a more active role in their own learning and evaluation, stronger students were able to challenge themselves more linguistically, whereas weaker students were given a support mechanism which could provide them with the initiative to continue on with the given task. However, one drawback was encountered. The researchers found that the self-assessment procedure had to be very structured and required practice in its use in order for it to be employed successfully by the students.

Perhaps the best known proponent of self-assessment materials for the classroom is von Elek (1981, 1982). The aim of his research was to develop a battery of test items that could be used at any given time within a program of studies for adults learning English as a Second Language in Sweden. Test items were developed in six skill areas - vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, speaking, and writing - and were written in the target language. The subjects responded to concrete questions on a three level scale of "Yes", "No", or "I think so" (Oskarsson). Each of the six skill areas was then sub-divided into 10 levels of varying degrees of language difficulty. The students were required to go through as many levels as they could until they were no longer able to proceed. The data was then collected and a profile developed which graphically depicted the language abilities of each student. The result is that "the resultant self-rated profile carries diagnostic information that the learner can use as a basis for decisions about what areas should have priority in his further work with the language". (Oskarsson, p. 25) This information now became a powerful tool for motivating the students to progress and ameliorate their language skills, perhaps the most important outcome of this study.

In order to assess the validity of the procedure, von Elek went one step further and had the students, along with the teacher, go through each item to ascertain if in fact the students were able to assess their own language abilities. While the results here were similar to those obtained in the study done by Achara, contrary to Achara's findings, there tended to be more students who overestimated their abilities when compared with the teachers' perceptions. Like Achara's study it is important to note that neither the procedure nor the criteria used by the teachers was discussed. Once again this brings to mind the reliability of the teachers' perceptions. Nevertheless the most valuable information that was obtained in this research project "is the fact that it is quite possible to move from self-assessment in general terms, . . . to self-assessment at a more specific and detailed level -- to self-assessment of learning by units, in fact." (Oskarsson, p. 28)

Based on von Elek's research, Berkoff (1984), of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, attempted to use self-assessment with university students studying English as a Foreign Language, not only as a means of placing them, but also as a monitoring method throughout the language course in order to show the students where their strengths and weakness were. Another purpose was to consider the possibility of using the procedure in a final examination situation. He followed the method proposed by von Elek, which required the students to assess their proficiency using the scale of "Yes", "No", "I think so" while reading the description of language tasks that the students could carry out in the language skills being assessed. According to Berkoff, the use of the "I think so" was an important aspect of this scale in that it provided a psychologically sound basis for chosing the "Yes" category, because "I think so" deterred students from selecting "no opinion" as a simple way of opting out of the question. In this study, the self-assessment tests constructed by Berkoff contained the same types of questions at varying levels of difficulty and were administered to students at a variety of proficiency levels. Both his self-assessment and achievement tests consisted of identical questions in the areas of listening comprehension, linguistic knowledge that tested vocabulary and grammar, and reading comprehension. Interestingly enough, in his pilot test he found that those skills which were not taught directly in the classroom, such as oral production and writing in this case, proved to be irrelevant to the testing situation and were consequently dropped. The self-assessment test questions were constructed in the following way: "'Do you understand...?', 'Do you know...?', 'Can you supply...?'" (Berkoff, 1984, p. 6) using von Elek's scale, with only "yes" answers being scored as correct. In terms of the achievement tests, the same questions were used only this time the students were required to do such things as provide the opposite word to the one underlined, fill in the gap or rewrite a sentence so that it appeared to be correct to the student. The procedure was carried out at varying intervals of the course. In general, his results showed that the type of test instrument used in the study was not adequate for student placement. Yet, it proved to be a valuable means of providing students with diagnostic knowledge with regard to their progress and a better understanding not only by the students, but the teacher as well, as to the types of processes and strategies that are employed in the acquisition of these skills and especially powerful in the sense that students were most accurate in assessing their abilities in those skill areas that were the focus of the course.

In order to comprehend the context of this study, it is important to look at the kind of work that has been done in

Alberta. In 1975, Parker, of the University of Alberta, carried out a study of French as a Second Language in the province. As part of the study, he looked into students' attitudes towards their ability to use their knowledge of French outside the classroom. A sample of students, in both urban and rural schools, was surveyed at various grade levels, namely Grade 6, Grade 9, Grade 10 (first year French High School students) and Grade 11 (fourth year French High School students). One of the questions on the questionnaire related to the students' perceptions of their progress in French. The students were asked to choose between three answers: 1) "I am getting very good marks in French.", 2) "My marks in French are just average.", and 3) My marks in French are not very good". In this part of the questionnaire, it was found that over 75% of the students felt that their marks were either "just average" or "very good", which indicates that students do have an idea of their progress. Another question related to student satisfaction with their progress in French. Again, over 68% of the students indicated that they were satisfied with what they were learning in French, which directly corresponds to their ability to assess their progress. However, when the students were asked their perceptions of their ability to apply their knowledge to a francophone context, many students indicated that they were unsure of their ability to function in a totally French environment. This perception was more obvious at the higher grades than the lower grades. The researcher's rationale for this pessimism stemmed from the fact that he felt that there was a possibility that the students were not being given enough feedback as to what was involved in applying their knowledge to a context outside of the classroom. In addition, in conversations with the teachers involved, they tended to be pessimistic about the ability of their students to use the language in such situations, an attitude which was probably conveyed to their students. This study was the first one done in Alberta which attempted to capture students' perceptions of their ability to use their knowledge of French and their attitudes towards the actual learning of the language.

In 1988 a Needs Assessment study was carried out for Alberta Education (Parker) which attempted to assess the present situation of second language study in the province. A variety of stakeholder groups were asked to fill out questionnaires regarding second language methodology and instruction. As part of the report, on the students' questionnaires, questions were asked with regard to their perceptions of their ability to communicate in their language of study. The questions described situations in the three language skills - speaking, reading and writing - on the basis of which students were asked to assess their ability on a 3 - point scale as to how well they thought they could use the language in these particular situations. The students' perceptions showed that those students who had spent a great deal of time in a second language program (9 years or more) felt generally confident about their ability to use the language. Those with fewer years of study in the language were much less optimistic.

In summary, the work of these researchers has laid the foundation for the present study. Many of their experiences have been incorporated into the design in an attempt to determine if school age children can in fact assess their own proficiency. According to a literature review by Blanche and Merino (1989), "few reports were concerned specifically, let alone exclusively, with self-appraisal practices" (p.315) Their research revealed that the studies were concentrated in the area of English as a second language, centering around high school or university undergraduates or adults. Consequently, the study to be described in the following chapter appears to be unique in its nature in that it pertains to school age children and the entire focus of the study is placed on self-assessment in a second language other than English.

CHAPTER THREE

Design of the Study

Quantitative research, in the second language context, has been the tradition for many years. The present research, however, was not undertaken in this tradition owing to the nature of the study. In this regard, it can be classified as a descriptive study, since it attempts to describe student behaviour and attitudes as they pertain to self-assessment.

This chapter will describe the sample, how it was obtained, the test instruments developed for the acquisition of data and the procedures employed for the study.

The Sample

Initially, the sample was comprised of all students in Grades 4 - 12 who were enrolled in the French as a Second Language Core program in a small, urban school district in Alberta. This consisted of all students enrolled in both the nine year program and the three year program at the High School level. Prior to the commencement of the study, the parents of this school district were notified by letter as to the purpose of the study in order to determine if they did not wish to have their child(ren) participate in the study. (This was done in accordance with The University of Alberta's policy on Ethics in Human Research). If any student did not wish to participate in the study at this point, or at any other point further along in the study, or their parents did not wish their child to, s/he was allowed to withdraw.

Since the study consisted of two parts - Part 1: the adminstration of the self-assessment questionnaire and Part 2: the validation of the students' self-assessments - it was decided to give the questionnaire to all students who consented to participate in the study (n= 1131; by school level: Grades 4 - 7 n = 786, Grades 8 - 9 n = 234, Grades10 - 12 n = 111). This sample, then, consisted of all those students present in the program the day on which the self-assessment instrument was administered.

Each of these students, prior to the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire, was given an identification number so as to maintain his/her anonymity. The names were obtained from class lists in each of the participating schools. Beside each name an identification number such as 890000 was assigned. From this first sample, a second sample was drawn to be used to assess the validity of the students' assessments in face-to-face interviews. This second sample consisted of a random sample of students chosen by selecting every fourth student on the basis of their identification number for Grades 4 - 9 and every second student on the basis of their identification number from Grades 10 - 12 (owing to the smaller number of students at each grade level at the high school level). This resulted in the following sample sizes: Grades 4 - 7, n = 196, Grades 8 - 9, n= 58 and Grades10 - 12, n = 54. (The groups are distributed in this manner owing to the district's organizational structure in which the elementary schools include grades 1 - 7.) However, when it came to validating the assessments, the sample number was reduced again owing to student absenteeism from either the oral interview or the written assessment for reasons such as outside school events, illness, poorly recorded samples or students who had moved away from the district. Consequently, the final sample consisted of Grades 4 - 7, n = 163, Grades 8 - 9, n = 56 and Grades 10 - 12, n = 53. (See Table 1, in Appendix 7 for an exact distribution of the sample, according to grade and sex.) It is this final group which will be discussed in the analysis of the data in Chapter Four.

Instrument Design

All the instruments that were used in this study were specifically designed for this research project and consequently had not undergone any other previous use other than in the piloting of the self-assessment questionnaire. Piloting was considered essential in order to determine if there were any problems in the comprehension of the questions at any given grade level. Six volunteers were obtained to assist in the piloting of the self-assessment questionnaire. Four of the volunteers were previous students of the researcher and the other two were students who had not been taught by the researcher. The researcher felt that by using two different groups she would be able to obtain valuable information as to any problems there might be with the comprehension and reliability of the self-assessment questionnaire. It was felt that the group known to the researcher would provide valuable feedback without hesitation considering their previous relationship with the researcher. In addition, she would be able to verify if the students' perceptions were congruent with the students' actual abilities, since this information was known already by the researcher.

The second group which consisted of two students who had not been taught by the researcher were used to provide other important information. These students were not only asked to complete the self-assessment questionnaire, but were administered the oral interview procedure to verify the level they were at by determining if their self-assessments were close to their perceptions in addition to ensuring that the procedure was a viable means of obtaining an aural/oral speech sample. Owing to time constraints, however, the instrument used to validate the reading/writing skills did not undergo a similar pilot validation other than an examination of it by two native speakers of the language to determine if the Cloze texts were authentic in nature and if the subjects would be able to provide the correct language structures.

In the following discussion each test instrument used in the study will be described and its intended purpose will be discussed.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The first test instrument that was designed was the self-assessment questionnaire. In this instrument progressively more difficult questions in each of the four language skills-aural comprehension, oral production, reading and writing were provided. These progressions were based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines and on the experience Raymond LeBlanc of the University of Ottawa had had in his research. His suggestion to the researcher was to use contextualized situations that were as precise as possible so that there was very little doubt on the part of the subject as to what kinds of language functions would be required in order to carry out the task. The researcher further decided to use contexts that would be very familiar to the students; i.e., real life situations that they were most likely to encounter in their daily lives such as hearing the score on a hockey broadcast or reading an advertisement for the sale of a ten-speed bicycle, being able to give a policeman an address or being able to write down a shopping list.

LeBlanc further suggested that the questionnaire be written in English, otherwise the students' ability to read French could be a factor in the results and this influence would be difficult to determine, since another test instrument would have to be devised in order to deal with this issue. Therefore, the decision was made to write the questionnaire in English, since the purpose of the questionnaire was to determine whether the students felt that they could carry out a particular task, not to test their ability to read the task description in French. This aspect would be tested later in the student validation component of the study.

Also taken into consideration in the development of the self-assessment questionnaire was the textbook material used by each grade level. Each textbook was examined in order to be certain that the language needed to deal with the contexts used in the self-assessment questionnaire would have been covered in the teaching of the four language skills. Further, this would ensure that the students had received sufficient exposure to the vocabulary and linguistic patterns needed to carry out the tasks, especially at the Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels (in terms of the ACTFL Proficiency Level descriptions which can be found in Appendix 1), since it was believed that most students fell into these categories. In addition, when the contexts were created, the tasks that were chosen attempted to keep student interest in mind as well as to respect their cognitive maturity. In addition, care was taken to ensure that these contextualized experiences were ones that the students would most likely have encountered in their maternal language, since this would provide them with an experiential framework on which they could draw on in order to determine if they could or could not carry out the task. This, too, was considered important, since it was the students' perceptions that were being validated and not their lack of experience in certain aspects of their daily lives. Thus, if the students perceived a situation not to be in their realm of experience, they would subsequently demonstrate difficulty with the task in the questionnaire. Therefore, great care was taken to ensure that the tasks and situations used in the self-assessment questionnaire were well within the range of experiences of the students.

Consequently, fifteen questions per language skill were devised ranging from Novice Low to Superior. The questions were arranged in such a way that the reader of the self-assessment questionnaire would be encouraged to read through all the questions as they were not sequenced in any progressive order of difficulty so as to avoid creating frustration or hurt feelings on the part of the participants. It was also felt that fifteen questions per language skill would provide enough variety in contexts so as to be able to give students a chance to feel comfortable with the self-assessment questionnaire, while at the same time attempting to reduce the possiblity of test fatigue or boredom. These two points were considered to be very important, since the same instrument was to be used from Grades Four to Twelve.

Each language skill section was assigned a 5 - point Likert scale which the subject could use to describe to what extent s/he felt able to carry out the task being described. For example, with the aural comprehension skill the scale was as follows:

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all.

b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details.

d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all.

e. I would not understand anything at all.

Thus, for every language skill a scale was developed that responded to the needs of that particular language skill. In essence, then, the instrument totalled sixty questions designed for a wide range of language proficiency levels.

A trial run of the questionnaire was carried out with a group of second language methodology students at the University of Alberta. The students were asked to do two things: 1) to use the questionnaire to assess their own abilities and 2) to determine the proficiency level of the questions which would be compared to the researcher's interpretations upon completing the two tasks. This exercise provided the researcher with valuable feedback with regard to the format of the questionnaire. The students had exhibited frustration when the scales were locatedat the beginning of each section only. Consequently, the scales were placed on the same page as the corresponding questions to avoid the need to flip back and forth between the questions and the scales. Having the scales on every page would now alleviate frustration and allow the students to concentrate on the task at hand. In addition, these students felt that the questions were both interesting and well within the range of the students for whom the questionnnaire was developed.

The second task, the opportunity to discuss the assumed proficiency levels of the questions, was of considerable help to the researcher in that it assisted in verifying her interpretations of the ACTFL guidelines. The perceptions obtained from the students coincided with those of the researcher's and confirmed the proficiency levels that had been designated by the researcher for each question. This information was to become very useful later on in determining the proficiency levels for each scale.

Oral Proficiency Interview

The oral proficiency interview used in this study was adapted from the one developed by ACTFL and ETS. In this study, the sole purpose of the oral interview was to obtain a global assessment of the students' communicative abilities so as to determine how closely the students' perceptions of their abilities matched those of their actual attempts to use the language. It was known from the beginning that an interview procedure would only provide a limited sample of the students' ability to use the language, since by its very nature, interviews tend to be one-sided; i.e., the interviewer *asks* the questions and the students *respond*. However, keeping time constraints in mind, it was still felt that this would be the most effective means of obtaining aural/oral data knowing that it would not provide a well-rounded sample of the students' linguistic, socio-linguistic, strategic or discourse competence. Nevertheless, it would still provide some insight into these areas, depending upon the students' ability to comprehend and use the language.

As in the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) for ACTFL and ETS, this recorded interview began with a conversational phase which was used as a means of helping the students to feel comfortable using the language, since they would most likely be coming to the interview situation from an English environment. This aspect of the interview involved asking the students personal questions such as "*Comment ça va* ?" (How are you?) or "*Combien de frères ou de soeurs as-tu* ?" (How many brothers or sisters do you have?) as a means of allowing them to express something that was most familiar to them, while giving them an opportunity to relax and not feel that they were "being tested". Once this part of the interview had been done, the interviewer was told to proceed to the next section in which the students would be required to answer questions which related to the situations used in the self-assessment questionnaire.

Three different question sheets were devised to provide variety in the types of questions asked. (See Appendix 3) Each sheet had questions beginning at the Novice level up to the Superior level in order to see how far the students would be able to apply their aural comprehension and oral production skills. Again the situations chosen attempted to address those areas with which the students would be most familiar in their daily lives. In addition, the questions developed attempted to address the issue of different cognitive levels. In this way, lower level questions (knowledge based or recall questions) were used as a means of putting the student at ease with the interview situation. Higher level questions (application, synthesis, evaluation type questions) were created to cater to the higher thinking levels of students and to measure their ability to use the language.

As the students demonstrated the ability to "handle" the situation, i.e., they were able to understand or produce an answer that best suited the situation, the interviewer would proceed to the next question level until the student was no longer capable of continuing. Students were allowed to answer in English when they felt they were no longer able to answer in French to determine if their aural comprehension level was higher than their oral production level. However, once the student was no longer able to answer, the interviewer was instructed to return to the level at which the student was able to respond confidently in French to terminate the interview as a means of allowing him/her to feel good about what s/he had been able to accomplish in the interview situation

The interviews were scheduled at approximately ten minute intervals as it was felt that within this time frame a sufficient sample of the student's proficiency could be obtained.

English Interview

An English interview was designed in order to obtain from the students their retrospective perception (Faerch and Kasper,1987) of the use of a self-assessment questionnaire as a means of determining their own proficiency. This procedure was to be carried out immediately upon completion of the French Interview, since the researcher wanted to limit the amount of time the student would be away from his/her regularly scheduled class.

A closed interview format was chosen so that student answers could be more easily compared. Five basic interview questions were devised in order to determine the students' attitude toward the self-assessment procedure. The researcher felt that it was necessary to ask the students why they thought they were being given the self-assessment questionnaire. This was to be the first question and was devised as a means of checking if the students had misinterpreted its use. The second and third questions were developed to determine if the students could ascertain for themselves what they thought the self-assessment questionnaire did or did not tell them about their abilities in French. It was hoped that these two questions would reveal if in fact the students had become consciously aware or more aware of their abilities. The fourth question asked the students to determine when the best time was to administer this procedure. By asking this question, it was hoped that the students would reveal the extent of their support for the procedure by specifying the time they perceived as being the most appropriate for the administration of the self -assessment questionnaire. The final question asked the students to state how the self-assessment questionnaire made them feel. This question was considered important as it would hopefully provide some valuable information on the use of self-assessment in the classroom. To close the interview, the students were asked if they had any further comments to make with regard to the questionnaire in case the five questions did not allow them to fully express their thoughts. The researcher felt that it was most important to allow the students to feel as though they had some sort of power to make changes if they so desired. (The questions for the interview can be found in Appendix 3.)

In essence, the main purpose behind this interview was to study the students' perceptions as they pertain to the use, pedagogical and affective value of a self-assessment questionnaire. It was felt that retrospection would be a viable means of accessing this data, since the time span between the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire and the oral interview in French may have allowed the students time to reflect upon the experience. In this vein, it was hoped that the questions used in the English interview would help to capture these thoughts. In addition, it was felt that the interview should be given in English as the students would view this as a nontest situation and less threatening and would be more likely to answer the questions more freely and elaborate more easily if they needed to.

Reading/Writing Tasks

To complete the set of instruments to be used in the study a reading/writing portion was also developed. Since the same test items were used to evaluate both the reading and writing ability, the items were designed in such a way as to: 1) require the students to comprehend the item in order to answer and 2) correctly write the answer so as to demonstrate comprehension and writing ability. Again contexts from the self-assessment questionnaire were used as a basis for this test instrument. Four different language ability levels of reading/writing tasks were developed using the random Cloze concept for three of the four contexts. The random Cloze was used so that the deletions could be decided upon by the researcher. In addition, the deletions were selected to allow for some creative use of the language when the student was able to determine the answer. The researcher also decided that an open-ended question should be included so that the students would have an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to write coherently in French.

In keeping with the philosophy already employed with the other test instruments, it was decided to use tasks that the students would most likely have encountered in their daily lives. Consequently, the first task involved the filling out of a school registration form. The form was set up in much the same way as the students were used to seeing it in English. This was done to make them feel comfortable with the test item, since the assumption was that all students were familiar with this kind of form. The test item was designed to require the students to apply their knowledge about the family to this context. This task was deemed to be a Novice-High activity according to the ACTFL guidelines, since the type of concepts which were being employed in this task were from this level. However, those students at the Novice-Low or Novice-Mid level would also be capable of answering some of the items in this component, since they would have had some exposure to a number of the items.

The second task was to read a description of a ten-speed bicycle for sale in a school newspaper. This task seemed appropriate for those students at an Intermediate level in that students at this level would be familiar with this type of bicycle. Consequently, it was assumed that the students would not have too much trouble with the vocabulary or a text presented in an advertisement format.

The third task dealt with a story about a new Disneyland project slated for France in 1992. This Cloze article was based on an authentic article written in the French newspaper *Le Figaro, vendredi, le 10 février, 1989, p. 29, 13828, édition de 5h* (Friday, February 10, 1989, p. 29, 13828, 5:00 p.m. edition) and was adapted for this validation procedure. It was decided to use an item like this for a number of reasons: 1) since Cloze tests are usually based on authentic texts, it was felt that since the other two tasks were "created", so to speak, this article would be in keeping with the philosophy of a Cloze test, 2) since Disneyland was a well-known place to many people, the students could relate well to the story and 3) the article could provide the students with some culturally valuable information about France. Finally, since part of the philosophy of test taking is to provide students with a learning experience, those who could read at this level would be leaving the test situation with some interesting new facts.

The final reading/writing task dealt with an article on Acid Rain that was reprinted with permission from a pamphlet written by Environment Canada and was destined for those students at an Advanced to Superior reading level as well as an Advanced to Superior writing level. This task asked the students to react to the article and suggest in writing ways in which this environmental problem could be rectified. At this level it was decided that a sample of longer sequences of writing was required. Consequently, the purpose of this activity was to see if students could develop and write coherent and cohesive sentences in French as well as demonstrate flexibility and creativity in their responses.

In summary, these were the test instruments devised for use at all the grade levels tested in this particular study.

The Pilot

Since the major focus of the study was the self-assessment questionnaire , it was decided to pilot it. Four previous French students of the researcher and two children not previously taught by the researcher were asked to do two things: 1) respond to the questionnaire as if they were in the "test" situation and 2) state if they encountered difficulties with the questions, such as certain words or situations to determine if the reading levels were appropriate. The six students whom the researcher had taught previously were used because their ability to use the language was known to the researcher, and it would not be necessary to go through a validation procedure once the levels had been determined. Also, it was felt that their previous relationship with the researcher would allow them to feel more confident about commenting on the questions, thus providing reliable feedback. In the case of the two unknown children, it was important to get their feedback on the wording of the questions because they were in elementary school. This information was considered necessary given that the same questionnaire was to be used at all grade levels.

None of the students found any problems with the questions, other than the references to Acid Rain, which they felt they would have difficulty discussing or writing about. However, since these questions were labelled as Superior level questions based on the ACTFL guidelines and were placed in the questionnaire to see if any students thought they were capable of handling these situations, it was decided to keep them in the questionnaire. Consequently no changes were made. The results obtained from the students' scores indicated that they were able to assess their correct level of proficiency.

As well, the researcher monitored the amount of time it took the students, especially the two elementary students, to complete the questionnaire. On the average, it took the students twenty minutes to complete; however, the elementary students took just a little over thirty minutes to finish. The researcher perceived this as adequate for all the levels and, at this point then, it was felt safe to proceed with the formal study.

Procedures

Administration of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The administration of the self-assessment questionnaire was carried out during the month of April, 1989, prior to which time five school principals (four elementary and one junior high) and one vice-principal (at the high school level) had been approached in formal meetings set up by the researcher to enlist their cooperation and to explain the entire procedure of the study. At the same meetings the permission letters for participation in the study were handed out to every student in the Core French program (See Appendix 2). It is important to note that in the case of this school jurisdiction, all students in Grades 4 to 7 were in a mandatory Core French program while those registered in Grades 8 to 12 were in an optional program.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire took place during a regularly scheduled French class so as to reduce any interruptions in the schools' daily routines. This was accomplished by obtaining the timetables for every French class. The timetable schedules were studied carefully and schedules were devised from this information. Each principal was contacted to confirm that the days and times chosen would not conflict with any special school activities already scheduled. Each school was called two weeks prior to the date scheduled to provide ample time to inform the staff of the commencement of the study and to remind students to return the parental consent forms..

At each school, the principal met the researcher to provide her with a work space, an overhead projector and the returned letters. She in turn provided the principal with a copy of the schedule of classroom visits so that he would know were she was at all times. Prior to the beginning of the assessment period, the data sheets for all those students who had returned their letters were pulled.

In every classroom, on the day when the self-assessment questionnaire was to be administered, the students were informed of the purpose of the researcher's presence and were assured that no one but the reseacher would see the results. At this time, any students who had returned the letter stating they were not to participate in the study, refrained from doing so and were assigned to another school-related task so as not to disturb those involved in the study. Those who were participating were also told that this was not a test, but rather a means for them to know more about what they felt they were capable of doing in French. This was done in an attempt to reduce test anxiety and to eliminate any concern on the part of the students that they would receive "classroom marks" for the project.

Prior to the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire, students were asked to fill in an information sheet which required the following information: 1) their self-assessment number, which appeared on the pre-prepared optical scanning sheets, 2) their grade, 3) their sex, 4) their age and 5) the number of years they had been taking French. For this information the students had to circle *the school years* in which they had taken French. This was considered the best way in which to gather the data as it would indicate which students were French immersion transfer-ins and those students who may have failed a school academic year and were consequently repeating the program. Once the information sheets had been filled in the students were directed to the self-assessment questionnaire.

An example of how the questionnaire worked was given on an overhead transparency. The example was as follows: *If* *you heard " un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, etc." could you recognize these words as being numbers ?* The students were asked to think about how they would answer this question using the aural comprehension scale described on page 2 of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire. The students were then asked if they had had any difficulty with the use of the scale or if they had any further questions. Once student concerns had been met, they were asked to proceed on their own. Students were also told that should they have any difficulties while filling out the questionnaire, they were to ask the researcher for help. In addition, they were reminded to hand in all three items: 1) the self-assessment questionnaire, 2) the information sheet and 3) the optical scanning sheet when they had finished the self-assessment questionnaire.

The students were required to fill in their answers using an HB pencil on an optical scanning sheet which would be computer scored by section; i.e., optical scanning sheets had been devised which would command the computer to provide a score after every fifteenth question. Students were encouraged to go through each section one at a time and at their own pace but within the confines of the time dictated by the class schedule. However, any students not finished at the end of the alloted time were allowed by the researcher and the classroom teacher to continue on into the next class to allow them ample time to finish. This was especially the case at the elementary level, since each elementary school had different French time allotments. Also, at this level, since the classes were homogeneous in nature, different reading levels and rates of reading were also apparent which contributed to the need for more time. At the secondary levels, owing to the length in class time and higher reading levels, this was not a factor.

At the end of each assessment day, the optical scanning sheets were sent to the University of Alberta Optical Scanning Department for the tallying up of the score sheets. The sub-sample that was to be used for the validation of the students' perceptions was obtained from the data sheets containing the "raw scores" of the students' perceptions.

The scores for each language skill section were tabulated on the following basis. Every answer was given a rating of 1 - 5, with the lowest answer being given a 1 and the highest possible answer a **5**. For example, using the aural comprehension scale the scores would look like this (scores are in bold face):

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all. **(5)**

b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details. **(4)**

c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details. **(3)**

d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all. **(2)**

e. I would not understand anything at all. **(1)**

In addition, as mentioned earlier in this study every question in the questionnaire was alloted a proficiency level based on the ACTFL guidelines. In this manner, "raw score" ranges were calculated to determine the proficiency levels of the students. For example, question 1 on page 2 of the Self-Assessment questionnaire (*If you heard two people speaking in French, could you recognize the language as being French ?*) was deemed a Novice-Low question based on the ACTFL guidelines. Since this question was set for a beginning student, the answer s/he should have given was (a) I would have no trouble at all for which 5 points. On the other hand, question 4 was considered to be a Superior level question (*If the Prime Minister was discussing his political beliefs, could you understand what he believes* ?). for which a Novice-Low learner would more than likely fill in the optical scanning sheet with either an (e) or (d) answer which would mean that for this question s/he would receive either 1(e) or 2 (d) points. If the student was an Intermediate-Low learner, s/he may have answered with (d) or (c). Thus, depending on the level of the questions and the students' perceptions of their ability to deal with the tasks, the tallied up scores would reflect their perceived proficiency level. The scores for the varying proficiency levels were determined by the researcher who went through the questionnaire simulating the answers that learners at a variety of proficiency levels would give to each question. (The proficiency level allocation of the questions can be found in Appendix 3 and the score ranges in Appendix 6.)

As was mentioned in the section on the sample, the initial validation sub-sample was obtained by selecting every fourth Student Identification Number for the elementary and junior high levels and every second Student Identification Number for the senior high levels. Once this selection was made, the researcher returned to the class lists to find the names of the students who had been selected to notify the principals and the teachers as to which students would be involved in the second part of the study and also to prepare the interview sheets for the interviewers. (This sheet can be found in Appendix 4) Once the preparations for part two were completed the schools were notified of the dates of the scheduled interviews.

Administration of the Validation Tests

This part of the study was further subdivided into two parts: 1) the aural/oral test validation consisting of the oral interview and the English interview and 2) the reading/writing test validation. As a result of time constraints, it was considered necessary to make two separate visits to each of the six schools so as to be able to carry out both sets of tests.

The first set of validations took place in the first two weeks of May, 1989 and the second set in the last two weeks of the same month. Prior to the aural/oral test validations, the interviewers were prepared for administering the aural/oral interviews and the English interview. There were five interviewers in all, one of whom was the researcher herself. All the interviewers were of Advanced or higher proficiency based on the ACFTL guidelines; four of the interviewers were substitute teachers for the school jurisdiction. The session included an explanation of the procedures for the administration of the aural/oral interview plus numerous recorded practice simulations in an attempt to prepare the interviewers adequately. The interviewers were also instructed to make annotations on the students' interview sheets of any kinds of nonverbal behaviours the students demonstrated such as use of mime, gesture, body position, nervous tension, or the like so that these could be taken into consideration when the aural/oral interviews were being assigned a proficiency rating, since the researcher would not have had visual access to all the subjects.

It was decided to do the first set of interviews at the high school level since it was getting to be quite late in the school year and the high cchool students, especially the grade twelves, would be preparing for final and departmental examinations. Interviews were scheduled at ten minute intervals so as to be able to obtain as large a speech sample as possible. However, it soon became apparent that many of the students were unable to answer the questions and felt very ill at ease with their inability to function in the language despite numerous efforts on behalf of the interviewers to allay their fear that this was a test. This became even more apparent at the elementary and junior high school levels where many students gave up immediately or explained that they had not learned these concepts even though these aspects had been checked out in the texts used in the classroom. Consequently, it was decided by the researcher that if the interview format appeared to be an unsuccessful means of obtaining a speech sample then the interviewers were to ask the students if they could just relate what they did know. In many cases, this resulted in lists of words with accompanying translations in

English or in students stating that they did mostly written exercises in class. This appeared to be the trend especially at the junior and senior high levels. Once the interviewers were satisfied that a student was no longer capable of going on further in French, they were instructed to administer the English interview, a component which did not appear to cause the students any problems. When all the aural/oral interviews were completed, the written segment of the study was administered.

As in the previous validation test, all answer sheet documentation was prepared in advance. The same students who had taken part in the aural/oral validation were also used in this portion of the study. In order to carry out the reading/writing test validation, every student was supplied with a copy of the Cloze texts and the writing assignment plus the answer sheet where the students were to write in their answers. Once again there were no time limits placed upon the students in order to accommodate different reading and writing abilities. The tasks were explained to the students and once again they were instructed to do as much as they felt they were able to accomplish. They were also told that if they did not know the word in French but could supply an English one instead, they were allowed to do so. This was viewed as a proper means of obtaining data on the students' reading comprehension despite the fact that they did not have the correct French word, since meaning was considered more important here than form. Form was considered a more important criterion for the writing portion.

After the nature of the reading/writing validation process had been explained to the principals of the participating schools, they expressed the desire to have all the students in their school involved in this part of the study assembled in one room and to be administered the test at the same time, since the same test instrument was to be used at all levels. This was perceived as both convenient and reasonable considering the amount of time consumed by the aural/oral interviews and the disruptions that were inevitably caused by the procedure.

At the senior high level, however, since the French classes did not conflict with any other courses, the validation process was carried out during the regularly scheduled French classes and in a space separate from the French classroom. At this level a number of students had difficulty finishing the test during the allocated class time and either remained past the end of the period or came back after lunch or after school to finish. This was considered to be an appropriate action, since what was desired was for the students to complete the tasks to the best of their ability and not to penalize them for their inability to complete the tasks in a given time frame. Also, it was the researcher's contention that the "test" situation was to replicate as close to reality as possible the process of reading and writing. Consequently, if the students required more time to reflect upon their answers or to edit their work, this was viewed by the researcher as a viable process and not as a possible means of contamination.

In the elementary and junior high schools the students were assembled in one area at the same time and this did cause some difficulty. It was perceived by the researcher that by this time the majority of students were not very willing to participate in this part of the study and consequently did not appear to take too much interest in what they were doing. This was especially apparent with a fair number of the students in grades seven to nine who once again gave up very easily. This may have been owing to their unfamiliarity with this type of test format or just a consequence of the time of year. It may also have been a consequence of their experieinces with the earlier parts of the validation procedure. This is only speculation on the part of the researcher, but is an important point to address since this may have affected the results. Once this aspect of the study was completed, all the data that was required had now been collected.

A few days were set aside before the evaluations began as a means of obtaining data from students who may have missed one or both of the test validations.

Analysis of the Data

The results of the data analysis will be discussed in the next chapter. However, at this point the process by which the test validations were evaluated and the approach used for the comparison of the students' self-assessment perceptions will be discussed.

The first tests to be evaluated were the reading/writing tasks since the researcher had access to one of the interviewers for a total of ten days for this purpose. Since a Cloze type procedure was employed it was relatively easy to score the students' answers. An answer sheet was developed by the researcher and the other rater to ensure a common criteria for the answers, in addition to providing some form of inter-rater reliability. (The answers to the reading/writing validation can be found in Appendix 5.)

The reading/writing test validations were scored twice, once to determine the students' reading proficiency level, and a second time to ascertain their writing proficiency. All scoring was color coded for easy identification of the points and for tallying of the results.

On the first scoring, the students were allocated either two points for writing a correct French word that fitted the deletion, one and a half points for a "Lexical Tie" (a direct French translation of an English word that was in keeping with the text) or one point for writing an English word that fitted the context of the deletion. In all cases, orthography was not considered as a criterion, unless the word could not be comprehended by either rater. For example, in task number one the students were asked to fill in the deletions with regard to a school registration form. The first deletion required the students to supply the name of Raymond's mother. If the student wrote a French name such as Marie or Monique, being that they are French names and Raymond is of French extraction, the student was assigned 2 marks. If the student wrote a name such as Linda, s/he was assigned one mark, since it was evident that the student understood the message, but was unable to contextualize the deletion.

In the case of the "Lexical Ties", this was a problem that became more apparent at the higher proficiency levels. For example, in task number three, the sentence "*On le trouvera directement à 32 kilomètres du coeur de Paris en prennant [46.   ] A4.* ". the expected answer is l'autoroute (highway) or la route (route); however, if the student wrote la rue , which translates as the road, which fits the context semantically, but not syntactically, s/he was given one and a half points. This process was seen as very important, because it demonstrated the students' attempts to deal with the text at all three levels of textual meaning as defined by the Cloze test (see page 20). The raters also noted on the students' answer sheets the number of lexical ties used, to see if this was a typical trait of a certain proficiency level.

This scoring method allowed for a total of 118 marks since there were 59 Cloze deletions. From the tallied score the students were assigned a proficiency level based on the following ranges, which were derived again from the level of proficiency was assigned to the task and simulations done by both raters as to what answers would be most typical of each proficiency level:

Proficiency Ratings for Reading Scores

Novice-Low = 0 - 15

Novice-Mid = 16 - 25

Novice-High = 26 - 30

Intermediate-Low = 31 - 41

Intermediate-Mid = 42 - 52

Intermediate-High = 53 - 68

Advanced = 69 - 93

Advanced+ = 94 - 109

Superior = 110 - 118

The level was noted on the student's answer sheet which was now scored a second time.

In the second scoring, the same procedure was applied. This time those words that had received two points in the reading section were now used as the reference points for the written scoring, since they had already been scored for semantic and syntactic viability. This time the point allocation was based on one point for the correct syntactic structure (for the purposes of this research labelled as linguistic intuition); i.e., the student was able to ascertain whether or not it was a verb, adjective, noun, and so on, but was not able to write the correct form, such as in the case of the imperfect tense versus the perfect past tense or the use of the correct preposition. A second point was then allocated to the accuracy of the form, i.e. the spelling of the word, and took into consideration such aspects as the correct use of accents, plurality or adjectival or verb agreement. In this case the total number of possible points, excluding the written reaction, was 177.

Once again a range was developed for the allocation of writing proficiency levels. The ranges were as follows:

Proficency Ratings for the Writing Scores

Novice-Low = 0 - 20

Novice-Mid = 21 - 40

Novice-High = 41 - 60

Intermediate-Low = 61 - 80

Intermediate-Mid = 81 - 100

Intermediate-High = 101 - 130 + writing assignment

Advanced, Advanced+, Superior = 131 - 177 + accurate writing assignment

As can be seen, these ranges are quite broad owing to the fact that the ACTFL guidelines suggest that the Novice-High level is where writing begins to be most prominent. Therefore, this test validation was scored in keeping with this philosophy.

The Writing Assignment

The writing assignment was evaluated on a number of critieria. The following questions were asked with regard to the content of the written assignment:

1) **How well was the student able to communicate his/her ideas?** In other words, did the student develop his/her ideas? Was there an introduction to the writing and a conclusion? Were the ideas logical and in keeping with task? Was the opinion stated and supported? In essence, this was seen as the general flow of ideas or coherence of thought (Canale and Swain).
2) **How well was the student able to connect these thoughts through the use of discourse**

devices? In other words, s/he attempt to use those devices that allow the text to flow such as *Vu que, pour que, parce que* in order to render the text more fluid? This was viewed as the cohesion of the text.

3) **Were correct lexical and grammatical items used in order to communicate properly one's ideas?** In other words, did the student use the correct words to convey his/her thoughts? Did incorrect grammatical structures interfere with meaning? This was considered to be grammatical competence.

4) **Was the written composition in keeping with the guidelines delineated by ACTFL?** (See Appendix 1 for descriptions.)

Unfortunately, very few students reached this aspect of the test. Consequently, no formal point scale was developed. Instead, the raters decided to answer the questions using a "yes/no" format and together read the few compositions available to determine if the writing was in keeping with the criteria described. Owing to the limited number of test validations of this question it was not possible to determine if the criteria adequately served the purpose.

All scores were tallied and retallied to ensure that the additions were correct. Once the tests had been scored, the students' perceptions and reading/writing proficency levels were matched with their identification numbers and the data was recorded to be analyzed.

Scoring of the Aural/Oral Interview

With regard to the analysis of the aural/oral interview and the English interview, this was a much more arduous and time-consuming task than the scoring of the Cloze test. Since there was only the researcher available to assess the interviews, no test of inter-rater reliability was possible. However, since there was only one rater, there was consistency in the criteria used, namely the ACTFL guidelines, which were very closely adhered to so as to maintain consistency and congruency in the proficiency ratings allocated. All the interviews were listened to at least once if not more in order to ascertain the aural/oral proficiency levels of the students. In all cases, in terms of the assessment of the students' aural comprehension, the rater was looking for the following criteria:

1) **How quickly did the student react to the question?** This was determined in two ways depending on the complexity of the question: 1) Was there an immediate answer given or was there a pause? and 2) If there was a pause, how long was that pause, one second, two seconds, three seconds, and so forth?
2) **Was paralinguistic or other nonverbal behaviour used to demonstrate that the student did not understand the question?** Since this type of behaviour cannot be viewed on an audio cassette, the interviewers had been asked to describe any type of behaviour such as shrugging, blank looks, signs of confusion, nervousness and any other pertinent behaviour to determine whether or not

the student was anxious or unable to answer the question.

3) **Did the student ask for repetition of the question or did s/he opt out of the question and/or test situation?** This was determined by the student asking in either French or English to have the question repeated. If the student opted out of the question s/he usually would state something like "I don't know." or "I don't understand." , which was a strong indicator of his/her inability to comprehend the question(s).

4) **Did the student answer all the questions in French or did s/he use English in order to demonstrate understanding of the question(s)?** This criterion was very important as it determined, in effect, the student's aural proficiency level. When the student gave an answer, the quality of the message was not being evaluated; rather, the rater was looking for some indication of the student's comprehension of what was being asked. In the case

of a yes/no question, either a one word answer or an elaborated answer would be accepted as demonstrating comprehension of the question. For questions that were more complicated in nature, such as a question requiring conjunction like "because", it was this lexical item and the message transmitted that demonstrated comprehension. The use of English to answer a question was considered to be legitimate in this situation, since, in many cases, this was the only way to determine if the students could understand more than they could produce.

In terms of the oral production aspect of the interview the following was the basis for the assigning of proficiency levels:

1) **How well did the student get his/her message across?** This was determined by the student's ability to deliver a reponse to the question asked within a reasonable time frame, i.e. what would be expected in a normal conversation. This did not take into

account grammatical errors or mispronunciation of words unless they totally interfered with the transmission of the message. For this criterion, the rater was looking for the student's ability to transmit a message that was appropriate for the question asked.

2) **Was there clarity in the student's answer to the question?** This meant, that aside from the usual paralinguistic features such as pauses and "ums" that are natural in oral discourse, the student produced an answer that was comprehensible and viable within the context of the question asked. In other words, the student's message was not filled with lexical items which distracted from its intent and were irrelevant to the answer.

3) **Did the student show any socio-linguistic ability suchas asking the interviewer how she was feeling after responding to the same question?** In other words, did the student ask the interviewer the same or a similar question as in

the case of: "*Bonjour. Ça va?*" "*Oui, ça va bien. Et vous (tu)?*" This was considered to be an important aspect of the interview situation, because it would show whether or not the student had learned or retained some of the socio-cultural patterns of th language and whether or not they understood and could apply the use of register. As well, it was hoped that the student would reciprocate the situation by asking his/her own questions in order to demonstrate his/her ability to handle the same language task.

4) **Did the student attempt to elaborate on his/her answers or were the answers limited in scope, e.g., one word answers?** This criterion was one of the discriminating factors in the assigning of the student's proficiency level. Depending on the nature and the complexity of the question, the answers given reflected the student's ability to produce the language. For example, in the case of an inversion question, a yes/no answer was considered

appropriate, but there were instances when the answer could be elaborated on by providing more information as in the following question: " *Aimes-tu l'école* ? " In this instance, the student could answer with a "Yes or no", but s/he could also state why s/he feels the way s/he does about school, which would demonstrate his/her ability to link thoughts together in the target language. This was viewed as the means by which the rater could distinguish between the different sublevels of oral production ability as described in the ACTFL guidelines (for example: Novice-Low, Novice-Mid, Novice-High).

5) **Were the answers well pronounced and the grammatical structures appropriate so as not to interfere with meaning?** In conjunction with number 4, this criterion assisted in determining the proficiency level of the student. Since accuracy of speech is an essential aspect of higher levels of proficiency, this criterion was used more at the Intermediate level and higher in order to distinguish

> the difference between the sublevels. In terms of pronunciation, the rater looked for natural intonation and inflection patterns and enunciation of vowels. In terms of grammar, the use of the correct verb tense, pronoun substitution, adjectival and/or pronoun agreement, and discourse devices were the focus as they pertained to the message being produced.

These were the basic questions that were used in order to determine the oral proficiency level in accordance with the criteria outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Again, once all the interviews had been assessed an aural/oral proficiency rating, they were matched with the corresponding self-assessment sheets to see how closely the students had come in perceiving their proficiency in each of these two language skills.

The last item to be analysed was the English interview. For this aspect of the study, the frequencies of answers were tabulated. In addition, portions of interesting and supporting comments were transcribed to provide the necessary data for the discussion on attitudes towards self-assessment. (See Appendix 8 for these additional comments.) These results will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the derivation of the sample used in the study, the development of the test instruments relative to this study and the procedure employed to obtain the data. It has provided a detailed account of both the process and the events leading to the acquisition of the data as well as a description of the analysis of the data in terms of how the students' perceived proficiency ratings were determined in addition to the criteria used in the evaluation of the aural/oral and reading/writing test validations. The following chapter will present results obtained from the collection of this data and the conclusions derived from the their analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the Data

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first part will examine the results obtained from a frequency analysis of the students' perceptions compared with the actual performance results obtained. The second part is a discussion of the data obtained from the English Interview based on the students' comments regarding their attitudes towards self-assessment. The final section outlines the conclusions arising from the analysis of the data.

Comparison of Students' Perceptions and their Actual Performance

Hypotheses regarding the results

Before embarking on the analysis of the data, the researcher, based on the results of other studies carried out on self-assessment in second languages, (Oskarsson, 1981,1978; LeBlanc and Painchaud, 1981, 1983, 1984) developed the following hypotheses to be tested:

Hypothesis 1: Students will be more accurate in their perceptions of their abilities in the four language skills the higher their grade level; i.e students at the elementary level (4 - 7) will experience greater difficulty in analyzing their ability in these skills than will those at the secondary level.

Hypothesis 2: Students will be more accurate in their perceptions of their abilities in the four language skills the older they are; i.e., younger students aged 9 to 12 will experience greater difficulty than those aged 16 to 18.

Hypothesis 3: Students will be more accurate in their perceptions of their abilities in the four language skills the more years they have spent studying French; i.e., the greater the experience the students have had with the target language, the more accurate their assessments will be.

Hypothesis 4: Students will be more accurate in their perceptions of their receptive skills than their productive skills. (c.f. Riet Evers,1979)

Hypothesis 5: Gender will not affect students' perceptions of their abilities in the four language skills.

Hypothesis 6: Students will perceive self-assessment procedures in a positive manner. (c.f. von Elek, 1981,1982).

These six hypotheses became the basis for the decisions made below.

Decisions for the Analysis of the Data

For ease of formatting, it was decided to arrange the data in a numerical fashion so that they could be analyzed statistically. This decision applied particularly to gender and the proficiency levels, since the other data (age, grade, years in French) were already quantified. For gender, this entailed assigning a 1 for males and a 2 for females. For the proficiency levels this required the sublevels to be assigned numbers on an interval system, from 0 to 8, with 0 referring to the lowest proficiency level, i.e., Novice-Low, through to 8, which referred to the Superior level as indicated in the ACTFL

Proficiency Guidelines.

At this point, in discussion with statisticians in the Department of Educational Research, it was determined that the best way to process this data was to use cross-tabulations and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) between variables to ascertain whether or not there were any correlations between the students' perceptions and their actual performance results. These were carried out using the SPSS-X statistical package.

However, it soon became apparent that owing to the nature of proficiency levels, i.e. that there is one full interval difference between each level, a statistical analysis could not demonstrate properly this phenomenon. Consequently, in order to view the tendencies and trends that were evident in the data, it was decided to analyze the data in terms of frequencies as opposed to correlations. These frequencies appear in Appendix 7 in the form of line graphes which can be found in Figures 1 - 16, in addition to Tables 3 - 18, which depict the means and standard deviations for each variable.

While the actual results can be found in Appendix 7 a descriptive analysis based on them is given below.

Descriptive Analysis of the Self-Assessment Results between Students' Perceptions and their Actual Performance

As can be seen in the hypotheses and Figures 1 - 16, the following variables were treated in the analysis of the personal data: grade, age, years in French and gender as they pertain to each of the four language skills. The student's self-assessment level was subtracted from his/her actual proficiency level so as to determine the interval difference between the two. The analysis is based on this difference as it applies to the 272 cases. This interval difference relates to the actual numerical distance that exists between the student's perception and his/her actual performance. It was this difference that was used to tabulate the frequencies and to calculate the means and standard deviations for each of the four language skills - aural comprehension, oral production, reading and writing - as they pertain to the variables listed above. The following description will discuss each one of these variables separately.

Findings

The following section describes each of the variables derived from the hypotheses on pages 120 - 122.

Grade as it pertains to accuracy

For this variable, the grades were grouped in the following manner: Grades 4 - 7, 8 - 9, 10 - 12, which, while different from the pattern used in many other parts of Alberta, reflects the organization used by the district in which the study was carried out.

As can be seen in Figures 1 - 4, a very prominent pattern emerged in two of the four language skills. This pattern was evident in the areas of aural comprehension and reading where it can be seen that as the students' grade level increased more students were able to assess accurately their proficiency level.

Closer scrutiny of the data also reveals that the students had an easier time in assessing their receptive skills than their productive skills. This is most evident in oral production and writing, in which Figures 2 and 4 illustrate that the vast majority of the students overestimated these skills by 2 or more proficiency levels, i.e. in oral production almost 64% of the students overestimated their ability to speak the language and 71% demonstrated the same pattern in writing. This may be attributed to the fact that the students may have had far more classroom experience with the receptive skills than the productive skills, which invariably take more time to develop and refine. Further, the oral interview method may not have been an experience familar to the students. In addition, it may not have relected the kinds of oral practice situations the students were accustomed to. This explanation is in keeping with Berkoff's research (1984) in that he, too, found that those skill areas to which the least amount of attention was given, caused the students the greatest difficulty in self-assessment.

In this vein, it is also possible that the higher the level of schooling the more the students are aware of what they know and, in addition, what they do not know, especially in the area of the receptive skills. This is evident from the high school students' results where the tendency is to see more underestimations than overestimations in the receptive skills, this being especially true in the area of reading. This is important to note, since there is a significant difference between the senior and junior high students' and the elementary students' ability to assess accurately their proficiency.

In this regard, if one looks at how students use their cognitive skills to solve problems, in this case comprehension, it is known that developmentally students are far more capable of abstracting and conceptualizing ideas in their later years of schooling than are younger students. They may also have at their disposal far more language learning strategies which allow them more access to the language functions and structures needed to carry out the communicative tasks (O'Malley, Chamot, Oxford). Research in first language acquisition may explain the vast difference between the elementary and secondary levels, in that the elementary students are, for the most part, still functioning at the concrete-operational level in their maternal language (Piaget,1932) and may not be able to conceptualize the necessary linguistic forms that are required to fulfill the communicative tasks. In other words, these students tend to process information based on their perception of a concrete physical world (Kahmi and Freimoth Lee, 1988). Therefore, they may have had no problem with the example given prior to the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire because of its concrete nature, since the task required the students to recognize numbers. In this sense, they were being called upon to use their declarative knowledge (Anderson, 1982, as cited by O'Malley, Chamot and Walker, 1987) i.e., the knowledge one possesses *about* something, as opposed to their procedural knowledge (ibid) which requires a person to employ his/her's knowledge about *how* to do something. Hence, this type of context would be well within their realm of experience. However, a context that would require the use of their procedural knowledge would pose more problems for them because it constitutes the use of abstraction, a process which involves the use of metacomponents (Stenberg 1985, as cited by Kamhi and Friemoth Lee, 1988); i.e., those "higher order executive processes used in planning, monitoring and decision making." (op. cit, p. 144) In essence, then, these students have not yet reached the developmental level that is required by the contexts presented.

This appears to be the situation, since in all four language skills the students between grades 4 - 7 overestimated their abilities by well over two proficiency levels. This trend is consistent with research, cited by Ruth Butler (1990), carried out in areas like running ability (Morris and Nemcek, 1982) toughness (Edelman and Omark, 1973) and school achievement (Eccles, Midgely and Adler, 1984; Eshel and Klein, 1981; Nicholls, 1978) in which these studies "indicate that young children have inaccurate and inflated perceptions of their competence in domains [like those cited above]." (Butler, 1990, p. 201) She goes on to state:

> . . . young children may be more likely to overestimate their competence not because they are inherently more "wishful" than older ones, but because they are more likely to encounter difficulties in processing information

relevant to accurate self-assessment. (ibid)

This only substantiates the previous notion that, developmentally, students at these grade levels are unable to assess their own proficiency and that grade level is a factor in a student's ability to assess his/her proficiency. From a teaching perspective this is an important point, because teachers can predict the probabilty of the accuracy of their students' perceptions based on this information.

With regard to Hypothesis 1, it can be stated, based on this analysis, then, that a student's grade level will be a factor in determining the success s/he will have in accurately assessing his/her proficiency level in the four language skills. However, his/her accuracy in a particular skill area is contingent on the focus given in class, i.e. the less emphasis given to some aspect of the program in the classroom, the less accurate the students' assessments will be as was most evident in the area of oral production. Thus, teaching methodology can play a factor in the students' ability to assess their proficiency. This pattern becomes more apparent the higher the level of schooling. However, this is only speculation, based on the students' comments, since this was not formally tested, nor was it the intent of this research to study classroom methodology or classroom dynamics.

Age as it pertains to accuracy

For this variable, students were divided into three age categories: 9 -12 years, 13 - 15 years and 16 -18 years. This was done in order to see if accuracy is dependent on the student's age. However, as is evident from Figures 5 - 8 such is not the case, since the same pattern that existed for grade level also is apparent for age. In essence, age and grade are not seen as independant variables; rather, they are very much related.

As was the case with grade level, two of the four language skills revealed an increase in accuracy which corresponded with the age of the students. In addition, the students' ability to assess their proficiency in the receptive skills is better than their ability to assess their proficiency in the productive skills the older the student. This is evident once again with the oral production skill showing 63% of the students overestimating their abilities to speak the language and 70% demonstrating difficulty in assessing their writing ability, indicating that these are the skills that the students have the most difficulty in assessing. As mentioned above, this may be a result of the teaching methodology and/or experience, or lack of experience, with the language skills.

Again, the younger students experienced the most difficulty with self-assessment in all four language skills, which further substantiates the fact that this is a process that is most likely not within their level of cognitive development. According to Butler:

> . . . evidence of clear age trends in the ways children define success and competence suggests that age differences in realistic self-appraisal may depend importantly on the degree to which settings define success in terms of task mastery or of proficiency relative to others. (1990, p. 202)

This is an important point, because it offers two possible reasons why the students of this age group were unable to assess their proficiency in any of the four language skills successfully.

The first reason may relate to the setting itself, in this case the classroom, in that communicative teaching may not have played a part in their development, which means that they cannot assess their "mastery" of something, since they do not understand what this "something" entails. This may be a consequence of the fact that the teaching of French at this level is not seen by the students as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but rather as just another course in their school life. Since the real value of learning the language has not yet been fully "internalized" (Horn and Hasbrook), these students may still be dependent on their teachers' assessments of their abilities.

Secondly, since these students are still at an age where they depend heavily on social interaction, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation, the experience of having to assess themselves on their ability to use French is foreign to them, because up until now they have relied heavily on what others have said about their abilities. In this sense, they are not self-reliant and are unable to "cognize" for themselves what constitutes the process of self-assessment. Again, this may be a function of their cognitive level, since the process in and of itself requires the abstraction of the communicative task and selection from memory of those linguistic and socio-linguistic elements which are required for its completion. Since this type of cognitive activity requires the ability to "imagine" these needs in highly abstract terms, it may be possible that this level of "reflectiveness"[2] (Schmidt) is not within the realm of experience for those students between the ages of 9 - 12.

This supports the idea posited by Oskarsson (1978) and Ferris (1983) with regard to the process of self-assessmentas something which must be taught and experienced. This implies that if aself-assessment procedure is presented in the classroom to students at this level possibly by "working" through the process as a group, i.e., socializing the procedure, and "experiencing it affectively", it can now be "cognized"[3] or "raised to conscious level", so that the students can distance themselves from the concrete learning of the language and internalize the reflective process needed in order to be able to evaluate themselves more accurately. This would be in keeping with Gardner's suggestion (1978) "that concrete operational children simply may need assistance [in solving a problem] rather than a total reorientation in thinking, to solve formal operational problems." (Kamhi and Friemoth Lee, 1988, p.135) This is only an assumption, however, and further researchwould be necessary in order to validate this.

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[2] Reflectiveness refers to the conscious state of knowing about something.

In keeping with this notion, on the other end of the scale are those students between the ages of 16 - 18 who tend to be demonstrating another pattern. Here an interesting trend, one that is typical of adults (Oskarsson, 1978; Riet Evers,1979), is emerging. It would appear that the closer the students approach adulthood the more they tend to underestimate their abilities, especially in those language skills in which they have the most practice, such as the receptive skills and writing. Their highest level of underestimation came in the area of reading where 61% of the students underestimated their reading ability. This pattern suggests that these students are moving in the direction of adults in the manner in which they assess themselves. In this regard, adults tend to be more aware of their abilities and often more skeptical about their chances of success when it comes to learning a second language. This may be a reflection of their level of self-esteem (Anderson,1982 as cited by Blanche and Merino, 1990)self-confidence and perceptiveness (Underhill,1987).

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[3] According to Schmidt (1973), cognition refers to the process of becoming aware of or raising to conscious level something "which is embedded in affect." (op.cit., p. 113) This involves a process of distancing one's self from an experience or experiences in which language plays a key role. This process becomes evident when a person can "objectify" or "stand back" from the experience and elaborate in words (language) what constitutes that experience.

Along these lines, according to Fisher and his collegues (1984, as cited by Kahmi and Friemoth Lee, 1988), adolescents and adults use a "fallback strategy", most often in spontaneous situations, which entails not doing their very best because of a "lack of strong incentive to do the hard work necessary to achieve a high level of abstraction." (op.cit., p. 143) This may account for the reason why this age group begins to demonstrate this pattern. However, this is merely speculation and would require further research in order to verify this notion.

With regard to Hypothesis 2, once again, it can be accepted to the extent that, since age appears to be a factor in a student's ability to assess his/her proficency, the older the student is the more accurate his/her assessment becomes. However, this only holds true for those skills with which the student has had more experience, which in the district under study appear most often to be the receptive skills and writing. Students are unable to assess their oral production accurately, possibly as a result of the lack of emphasis placed on this skill.

Years of French study in relation to accuracy

This variable was subdivided into four categories, based on the number of years of study in the language: 1 - 3 years, 4 - 6 years, 7 - 9 years, and 10 - 12 years. It was important to look at this variable in that there were a fair number of students throughout the sample who had either repeated a grade in school, which was most evident at the elementary level since French is mandatory at this level or there were students who may have opted to repeat the French as a Second Language program at the high school level, since this district allowed for students to do so.[4]

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[4] In the aural/oral validation part of the study, a number of students stated that they were French Immersion transfer-ins. These numbers are reflected most often in the 10 -12 year category, but some students may also be in the other groupings. This situation is a consequence of the district policy which allows for students who were previously in a French Immersion program to transfer into an English school and maintain their French proficiency by enrolling in the Core French Program.

From Figures 9 to 12, once again the same pattern is apparent, i.e. that in two of the four language skills, i.e. aural comprehension and reading, the students were better at assessing their proficiency the more years of experience they have had. However, the 10 - 12 year category tended to underestimate their receptive proficiency while coming relatively close in their estimation of their productive ability. This trend points to the possibility that, owing to the greater experience with the language of this group, who are most likely the immersion transfers-in, they are able to abstract the necessary linguistic, discursive and socio-linguistic elements required to complete the communicative tasks and be more accurate and capable of assessing their abilities in the four language skills. So, too, the notion of the "fallback" strategy mentioned above may even play a more significant role here. Because of their greater knowledge base, both declarative and procedural, the expectation would be that these students should not exhibit difficulty in assessing their proficiency.

However, even some of these studentds demonstrate difficulty in assessing their oral proficiency as did the other groups. This once again points to the assumption that this skill may have been given very little attention in the classroom and consequently, the students are unable to assess their proficiency in this area. Therefore, with regard to Hypothesis Three, it is reasonable to state that the more years of experience a student has had with the language, especially with those skills which are the focus of the classroom methodology, the more accurate the student will be in assessing his/her proficiency.

Gender as it pertains to accuracy

This variable was considered to be the most interesting of the four, since second language folklore holds the belief that girls "mature" more quickly than boys and tend to be better at languages (Loulidi, 1989). One might therefore assume that the girls would be better at assessing their own proficiency. However, the researcher did not believe this to be true, since she assumed that all things being equal: physical environment, teaching methodology, language experience, grade level, age and years in French, gender would not affect the ability to assess one's proficiency. However the results seem to support the folklore.

It is important to note that the distribution between the two sexes in this sample is relatively even - males 44.5%, females 55.5% - an interesting point considering that at the junior and senior high school level the tendency for boys to remain in French diminishes considerably.

Looking at Figures 13 - 16, it is evident that the same skill areas which are mentioned above as being the focal point of much of the classroom teaching in the district are again the same ones in which the students show their strength in their ability to assess their proficiency. For both sexes, the productive skills are a problem, but more so for the boys.

The skill causing the most problems was the writing skill. However, if one looks at research in first language acquisition (see Nelson, 1988 for an extensive discussion in this domain), the most significant changes in a student's ability to express him/herself in writing in his/her first language occur during the ages of 9 to 20. Therefore, from a pedagogical perspective it would seem that this would be the last skill in a second language to be developed.

In this study, the students, especially the boys, had the most difficulty in assessing their proficiency in this skill. This may be a reflection of the classroom situation, in that the students' perception of what constitutes the skill of writing in a second language is in fact a misconception of the process in itself. In other words, they believe they are writing because they are filling in deletions with vocabulary previously learned or doing transformation exercises that appear to be "writing", but are merely uncontextualized fragments of text. In this way, the students believe that they are writing in French even though there appears to be no carry over from their experience in writing in English, where they are required to write lengthy passages and connect long trains of thought. It is difficult to determine whether this is the case or not, since the breadth of this research is limited to self-assessment. However, this is only an assumption based on students' comments obtained from the oral interview and the reading/writing answer sheets.

In their oral production assessments, the students were also substantially incorrect and there was very little difference between the two sexes. Needless to say, this same pattern was evident in the other three variables mentioned above and is most likely, as previously mentioned, a consequence of the teaching situation.

However, the most curious difference lies in the skill area of reading where the girls tend to be either more accurate (20% over 12%) or underestimate more than the boys (24% for the girls, 12% for the boys. One possiblity for this difference may be a result of the manner in which boys and girls are socialized in general. Research by Burstall (1974, as cited by Loulidi,1989) suggests that learning a second language is more "admirable for girls, but unmanly for boys." (op. cit., p. 202)

Further, in research carried out by Oxford and Nyikos (1987) in learning strategies as they pertain to sex differences, the following two key points were drawn from their work. First and foremost, females have the tendency to be more "intuitive" thinkers whereas males tend to be more "analytical, logical thinkers". (Bardwick,1971 as cited by

Oxford and Nyikos). When looking at the skill of reading, it is a process that not only requires a person to decipher written symbols converting them into words, but also the ability to draw and interpret meaning from an amalgamation of words which constitutes a written text. It is conceivable, then, that because of a female's intuitive nature, she may be more capable and/or tolerant of ambigious text or the unknown and is willing to pursue meaning that a male, owing to his inclination to be more logical, is unwilling to do.

Secondly, females tend to study second languages for social reasons whereas males do so for academic or more pragmatic reasons such as career aspirations (op. cit). In this regard, females are more outwardly communicative and cooperative in the way they deal with language tasks. Males on the other hand tend to deal with language in a more hierarchical fashion, viewing it as a means of showing dominance, attracting and maintaining an audience and being assertive (Maltz and Borker, 1982 as cited by Cooper and Anderson-Inman, 1988). Based on these notions, one would expect that females are more inclined to view their abilities in a second language from a more cooperative point of view and that males tend to view their language abilities from the perspective of power. Thus, amalgamating these two ideas, it is possible to say that in the area of reading females tend to be better judges of their proficiency than males owing to their more sociable view of language use and their deploying of intuitive strategies to deal with language.

On the other hand, males, owing to their logical and analytical means of thinking and their tendency to view language as a tool of power, are less capable of judging their proficiency in the four language skills, possibly owing to the fact that the self-assessment questionnaire was not precise enough for them to analyse the communicative intents that were required to complete the task. This was evident in the following statement by a Grade 8 boy:

> It was pretty good. It was a nice length. It wasn't too overdrawn or just too short. Some of the questions were a bit vague.

Therefore, what appears to be happening is that from a pragmatic point of view the questionnaire was in keeping with what a male would perceive as a test situation that was not time consuming and practical in its use. However, the idea that it was vague seemed to bother this boy, since the possiblity lies in the fact that reading may be the underlying factor in the differences between the sexes.

Further to this notion, a point must be raised with regard to the language of the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was written in English, the reading of the text and the processing of the task information may have occurred, one assumes in English. However, the tracing in memory of the linguistic, socio-linguistic and discourse patterns and elements required the student to switch to French in order to determine if s/he could carry out the task in French. This is a possiblity since one student, a boy, had made the following comment in the English interview:

> I thought it was pretty interesting that some of the questions they were asking really made you think. You don't really think about this kind of stuff everyday. You just turn on the radio and whatever it is you just listen to it. You just turn on the T.V. and just watch whatever is on T.V. You don't really think about this. Maybe you

> should have had some of the questions in French, because I was just thinking in English. I wasn't thinking it was in French at all. It was hard to think in French when I was reading in English.

The difficulty in processing of information in this fashion may be owing to the fact that in general girls are better at reading than boys[6]. Further, research in reading[7] suggests that these differences, in many ways, may be attributed to perception and cognition. Once again, this may be reflected in the notion that girls, by their intuitive nature, may focus more on what is needed to communicate and comprehend meaning from text whereas boys, owing to their compulsive need to interact with

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[5] Canadian research studies by Bloom et al; Steiner, Steinen and Newman as cited by Holbrook, 1988, p. 574. Work carried out by Klein, 1989 has revealed that in routine test situations reading and I.Q. differences favored girls. (Klein, p. 302)

[6] Research by McGuiness and Pribram (1979) suggests that "another cognitive factor, differences in response "biases" [may be the cause] : Boys are more active and impulsive, and superior in exploratory and manipulative action, while girls focus on communication." (Holbrook, p. 575)

text on a more impulsive basis[7], may only go as far as cognizing **what** the text is stating rather than taking the process one step further and interpreting the extent to which they are able to carry out the task successfully. This may be owing to the fact the text is not in French and requires the processing of data between two languages, which from a logical perspective is contradictory, since the students are being asked to ascertain their level of success in a given task situation in French, but they are being asked to read it in English. This may be one possible reason for the boys' experiencing more difficulty with this skill. However, this is only an assumption drawn from one student's comment and further research will be required to determine the reason behind this dramatic difference between the two sexes in this particular language skill. Nevertheless, given the context of the self-assessment questionnaire, it is difficult to ascertain whether it was the reading of the questionnaire in English that assisted the girls in assessing their reading ability in French or the fact that girls may have more confidence in this particular ability. Only further research will be able to answer this assumption.

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[7] Klein cites research carried out by Ginsburg and Miller, 1982 and Slovic, 1966 that states that "There is some evidence that boys appear to take more risks [in reading] than do girls." (p. 299)

With regard to Hypothesis Five, then, it is to be rejected as it appears from the analysis that with regard to gender there is sufficient evidence to ascertain that this variable does affect the students' ability to accurately assess their proficiency in the four language skills, of which this tendency was most obvious in the reading skill. Once again, it is apparent that more emphasis is placed on the receptive skills than the productive skills. Therefore, it can be assumed that the manner in which the language is taught may affect the students' ability to assess accurately their proficiency more than any other factor

Summary of results

From the analysis of the data as it pertains to the students' perceived proficiency and their actual performance given above, the following results were obtained:

1) In three of the four variables -grade, age, and years of French study - there is not enough evidence that these three variables have any real effect on the students' ability to assess their proficiency. However, what is apparent is the fact that as students move along a chronological and developmental continuum that encompasses more experience with the language over time, they become more accurate in assessing their proficiency in the four language skills.

2) It is also evident that the students have less difficulty assessing their proficiency in those language skills which appear to have received more emphasis in the classroom. Therefore, classroom methodology may play a key role in helping students to assess their own proficency accurately.

3) Only gender appears to have any bearing on the manner in which students are able to assess their proficiency. This was especially evident in the area of reading, where the girls were far superior in their ability to assess their own

proficiency level. This may be a result of sex differences in such areas as attitude towards learning a second language, cognitive development, and reading ability in one's first language. However, the reasons behind this are not within the breadth of this research and are only speculations at this point.

The following section will describe the students' feelings and attitudes towards the process of self-assessment as they pertain to Hypothesis Six.

Descriptive analysis of the English Interview

This aspect of the study relates to the English interview that was administered to the 272 subjects immediately after the French Oral Proficiency Interview. The interview was composed of five main questions. Students' remarks were later categorized in order to determine if there were any common feelings towards the use of a self-assessment questionnaire. This part of the study is unique to the field in that students' feelings about self-assessment have not been investigated.

Each question will be analyzed separately based on the results. These can be found in Tables 19 - 24 in Appendix 7. It was decided to tabulate the results according to grade at the elementary and junior high level and by program at the senior high level, since in this way the comments appeared to be more pertinent and revealing. At the high school level, the comments were tabulated according to the two Core French program streams being offered at the time. At the beginning level, the program is labelled in the following manner: French 10, 20 and 30. The Advanced stream or Nine Year Program is labelled: French 10N, 20N and 30N. At the time the study was carried out, the District's only high school was offering the following courses: French 10, 20, 30, French 10N and French 30N. It is for this reason the tables are set up in this fashion.

Analysis of Question 1

This question asked the students to describe why they thought they were being asked to fill out the self-assessment questionnaire. The purpose of this question was two-fold.

First, the researcher wanted to ascertain if the students had been informed by persons other than the research staff as to its purpose, prior to the filling out of the questionnaire, of its purpose. It was important to know this because the students' attitudes towards the self-assessment questionnaire may have been biased by statements made to them previously. It was hoped that by asking this question, it could be determined if they had taken the questionnaire seriously. Secondly, if the students' attitudes were not biased in some way, the researcher was interested in knowing if the students had become consciously aware of the value of self-assessment for their own purposes.

Table 19, in Appendix 7, demonstrates that a number of students (38.2%) felt that the purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how much of the language the students knew. In other words, either they had been told or had assumed that they were participating in a system wide assessment of the French as a Second Language program. A further, 17.3% of the students thought that the questionnaire was for research purposes, which, in essence, means that these students had taken the questionnaire to be of value only to the researcher and not to themselves. This only affirms the researcher's belief that the students' perceptions had been biased in some way. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether these perceptions had a positive or negative affect on the students' ability to assess their proficiency.

Nevertheless, there were four students at the high school level and 15 students in Grades 5 - 8 who did realize that the purpose of the self-assessment questionnaire was not to test student knowledge. These students viewed the questionnaire as another way in which they could receive information about their progress and abilities. Although this number is small in comparison with the other two main reasons, it does demonstrate that some of the students were capable of attributing value to the use of a self-assessment questionnaire without being told of its purpose.

This is important pedagocially, because the underlying purpose in learning a second language is the intrinsic value that is given by the person to the learning of the language. If the value is not there it becomes increasingly difficult to learn the language. This may be one of the reasons why the students had difficulty in assessing their own proficiency in that their attitude towards learning the language, in general, was not very positive. However, since attitude and accuracy were not seen as the focus of the study, initially, they were not correlated statistically since the instruments were not designed to test this variable. Needless to say, it raises another issue as to the effect of attitude in a student's ability to assess his/her proficiency accurately and may provide a basis for future research. Thus, it can only be assumed, then, that the students were not cognizant of the true value of a self-assessment procedure.

Analysis of Question 2

This question asked the students to determine for themselves if the self-assessment procedure had given them any ideas as to what they perceived they would be able to do in French. It was hoped that this question could provide some insight into the students' perceptions of what self-assessment could do for them in the classroom and by the same token raise to a conscious level, for the students' benefit, the value of a self-assessment procedure.

From Table 20, it can be seen that the majority (65%) felt that the self-assessment questionnaire provided them with information on what they were and were not able to do in French. This feeling was consistent throughout the grade levels. In contrast, only 14% felt that the questionnaire did not give them enough information about their abilities. This is important to note because it reinforces the notion that the questionnaire is able to raise to the students' conscious level their declarative and procedural knowledge. In addition, this demonstrates that the students are cognizant of the purpose and value of the process of self-assessment.

Some students, through the use of the questionnaire, were able to identify or confirm some of their suspicions with regard to their ability to use French. 4.8% of the students said the questionnaire told them that they were not very good at applying their knowledge of the language and three students at the high school level actually stated that the questionnaire told them they were experiencing trouble with speaking the language. Again, this demonstrates that the questionnaire was able to raise to a conscious level the feelings these students had about their ability to use the language.

This question also elicited a number of individual comments which reflect the various ways in which the questionnaire affected the students. These comments ranged from what students felt they were lacking in their ability to use the language to the fact that the questionnaire showed them that they needed to improve their work habits or certain aspects of their knowledge of the language in the classroom. These comments demonstrate that the students were capable of attributing a functional value to the use of the questionnaire. In essence, not only did it raise to a conscious level what the students felt they were able or not able to do, but it also provided them with information about those areas which needed improvement, something about which they may not have been aware of before.

In many ways this addresses an issue brought forth in an article by Blanche and Merino (1989) with regard to self-assessment. Most research in this field has centered around the grammatical use of the language as opposed to its communicative use. In this vein, then, according to Blanche and Merino, the focus of research in self-assessment has been on the acquisition of the language (grammatical competence) and not its performance (communicative competence). Thus, if teachers are to find this procedure to be of value at the classroom level, self-assessment questionnaires must deal with more than just the acquisition of the language; rather they must also handle communicative factors as well. It is the researcher's belief that this questionnaire has shown how students' can determine, in a global sense, their level of performance in the language, since the essence of the questionnaire was based on the concept of one's ability to carry out communicative tasks in the four language skills. In other words, students have a fairly good idea of what they have acquired and what they need to acquire in order to fulfill the task at hand.

This makes a point about the contribution which the use of self-assessment procedures may make at the classroom level. As in other research studies (Hedit, 1979; Holec, 1979; Ferris, 1982), this study tends to support the notion, based on the students' comments, that a self-assessment procedure is a valuable motivational device not only for improving one's knowledge and use of the language, but also one's desire to study the language. This is valuable for teachers to know, since too often they place value solely on summative evaluation. In this regard, teachers may need to be convinced that this procedure serves an educational purpose, not only for the students, but for themselves as well in that by allowing the students the opportunity to participate more actively in their learning so as to develop more autonomony in the acquisition of the second language .

At the same time, however, teachers must also be aware of the limitations of self-assessment in that it does not specifically identify those linguistic elements or communicative abilities which have been acquired. Rather, it only provides general information about these areas. There is a danger that teachers may rely on this form of evaluation as an accurate measure of the students' abilities, when in fact it only provides a global picture of what students' feel they are able to do. In essence, though, its true pedagogical value comes in the way in which it can change students' attitudes and motivation towards their learning and use of the language. This point will become more apparent in the comments made by the students in the analysis of questions four and five.

Analysis of Question Three

This question asked the students to discuss what they felt were shortcomings in the questionnaire's ability to tell them about what they were not able to do in French. This question seemed to cause the students some difficulty since 32% of the students did not answer the question and another 33.5% of the students felt that there was nothing that really bothered them about questionnaire. It is difficult at this time to interpret exactly what this means since the students did not elaborate on why they felt this way. There is the possibilty, however, that since there was a two week lag between the administration of the questionnaire and the interview that these students had forgotten a fair amount about what had taken place. On the other hand, there were students who did express concerns about the questionnaire.

10.6% would have liked to have received immediate results in such areas as to the degree to which they correctly answered the questions and what level they had attained. This is a valid point, since their results were not given to them. However, this also demonstrates that these students were not reflecting on what kind of information was being given by the questionnaire such as confidence in one's own ability to assess one's proficiency in the language skills. Further, it demonstrates that many students are unable to view the process of evaluation beyond the need to receive a "mark" or to know that they have given the "correct" answers, because they may be used to learning French for the "right" answer and not for the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas in French which would provide more opportunities for making mistakes. Other comments such as: "The questionnaire did not tell me if I had evaluated myself correctly.","It did not tell me how I stood against others." or "It did not tell me if I was good or bad in French." only further supports the notion that these students do not perceive self-assessment as an autonomous process; rather it is a process that is dependent on how a "significant other" will perceive their progress.

However, one must also bear in mind that these comments may be related to the experience which these students have had in the classroom and should not be considered negative. Instead, they reflect the common practices of evaluation in the classroom, where it has been decided that the only person capable of evaluating the students is the teacher. Here, too, one is confronting a philosophical change not only for the students, but for the teachers as well. In order for teachers to employ this form of evaluation, it will be necessary for them to rethink both the teacher's and students' roles in the classroom.

Therefore, this question has demonstrated that a fair amount of developmental work is necessary in order to change students' attitudes about the role and function of self-assessment.

Analysis of Question Four

This question asked the students to state when they felt was the best time to administer a self-assessment questionnaire like the one they received. 42.3% of the students felt that at the beginning and the end of the year would be the best time to take the self-assessment questionnaire, because they felt that in this way they could see their progress; they could identify where they had improved and where they needed to improve, i.e. for comparison purposes as well as for determining strengths and weaknesses. In addition, they could see where their attitudes towards learning the language had changed; they could use the questionnaire to review the previous year's work and as an advance organizer for the present year of study. Teachers could use it to place students in a language program which would best serve their particular learning needs. All of these points were made by students which demonstrates that they can see real value in assessing their abilities as it can provide them with valuable information that can guide them in the learning of the language.

A second group (34.9%) stated that it should only be administered at the end of the year. The interesting point here is the composition of this group, which might explain why these students would be more inclined to answer in this way. This group was composed mostly of students who were enrolled in French programs at beginning entry points, i.e. grades 4, 8, or 10. Therefore, because of where they were in the program, they were consciously aware of their limitations in the language and did not feel that it would be worth their while to take the test at the beginning of the year since they would lack the necessary language experience at that point. However, they did feel that there was value in taking the self-assessment test at the end of the year, because it would demonstrate to them how much they had accomplished throughout the year.

The remaining group (22.8%) favored the administration of the procedure at other points in the year, such as the beginning of the year (12.5%) and the middle of the year (5.1%). The students who favored the beginning of the year viewed the questionnaire as an instrument which could provide teachers with insight into students' needs in terms of learning the language. For students it might serve as a gentle reminder of what they had learned the previous year and may have forgotten over the summer holidays. Collectively, though, the students have confirmed that they do believe that the questionnaire should be administered and that the most popular times of the year would be either at the beginning and end of the year or only at the end of the school year.

Since the attitude of the students to the questionnaire is generally positive, how the students felt after the administration of the questionnaire is the issue raised in the analysis of question number five. The time when it should be administered and the feeling the students obtained upon its completion are inherently tied together as will be seen in the next section. In addition, the following analysis may shed some light on why the younger students are less able to assess their abilities than are older students.

Analysis of Question Five

This question asked the students to relate the feelings which they had after they had completed the self-assessment questionnaire. The researcher felt that in order to determine the viability of the procedure it was important to know how the process had affected the students' confidence and self-esteem. At the same time, it was felt that the question would assist students in becoming more aware of their own feelings. It was felt that since these were retrospective comments, in that the interview took place two to three weeks after the completion of the self-assessment questionnaire, these students would have had sufficent time to reflect, either consciously or subsconsciously about their experience.

Overall, 44.8% of the students felt good about the process. They stated that the reasons they felt good were with regard to the fact that they had become more aware of the kinds of things that they had learned in class: it made them feel good about themselves and the learning of French; it showed them where their strengths were and where they could improve; and for some, especially at the high school level, it made them realize that they knew more than they thought they did. In this respect, one could assume that the questionnaire could have had a positive "washback" affect on the students' learning. This is evident from one Grade Twelve student's comment which states "It made me think a little bit about what I am able to do. It made me work harder." and a Grade Eleven student who felt that the questionnaire would compel a student to want to do more in the classroom, because they had not learned some of the things mentioned in the questionnaire such as Acid Rain, which he felt he would like to investigate more in both languages. It is obvious by these statements that the questionnaire did affect the students. Therefore, it can be inferred that the questionnaire continued to play some kind of a role in the way the students were interacting with the language or behaving in the classroom. However, the extent of this "washback" affect cannot be determined by this study and would require further research.

Nevertheless, within this group it is interesting to note that students between grades four to seven (52.1%) had the highest percentage who stated that they felt good about what they had accomplished in French by means of the questionnaire. One student in Grade Six had even mentioned "I felt good because I had tried my hardest.", which affirms Butler's (1990) notion that:

> . . .young children infer high competence if they have tried hard and met task demands or improved previous performance. As a result, they tend to adopt a task-involved motivational orientation, where the main goal of achievement is to develop mastery and understanding. (op.cit,p. 202)

In light of this notion, it is interesting that these students viewed themselves in a positive fashion, since for them the value of having completed the "task", which in this case is the self-assessment questionnaire itself, included obtaining an understanding of its purpose and of having completed the questionnaire to the best of their ability. However, this inflated perception of how good they felt about their ability to use French may have been the contributing factor in their failure to assess their abilities accurately. This is only speculation and would most certainly be an interesting facet of self-assessment research, since the amount of research done on the effect of attitude on a person's ability to assess accurately his or her abilities in a second language is extremely limited (Blanche and Merino, 1989).

The senior high students ranked second in this category. Here the difference lies in the way in which the students expressed this positive feeling. For these students the self-assessment questionnaire served as a means for planning their future learning patterns in the classroom. This is demonstrated in this comment by a Grade 10 student, " It made me realize what I could do and what I couldn't do and I thought 'Well, O.K. This is where I have to brush up on.' It was good for our knowledge,...because some things we take for granted." This comment exemplifies the notion that the students at this age can feel good about the use of a self-assessment procedure not only to boost their confidence in the learning and use of the language, but also as a metacognitive strategy (Oxford,1990) in that it provides them with an instrument which can assist them in organizing their learning in the classroom.

The next highest group (23.2%) overall refers to those who felt both good and bad about their abilities via the self-assessment questionnaire. Consistently, the students felt that the reason they felt both of these feelings was linked to the fact that they felt positive and confident about what they were able to do well, but negative toward the fact that they were unable to do some things in the questionnaire.

In this group, the students who exhibited the greatest frustration once again were the ones in grades four to seven. Globally, they felt good about the fact that they were learning a second language, but bad because they could not answer many of the questions, which they perceived they should have been able to answer. Referring back to Butler's notion of task-involved motivational orientation, it can be seen that these students based their feelings on the fact that they had not "comprehended " or "mastered" the communicative tasks which had been presented in the self-assessment questionnaire. This is most important since one of the goals of this study was to raise to a conscious level what the students' felt about their abilities in French. Thus, from a socio-affective point of view, the students even as young as nine years old were sufficently mature to accept their abilities such as they perceived them to be; however, if one takes the notion of Piaget's belief of younger children's "wishful thinking", this, too, is evident, since the students at this age did express a desire to be better than they realized they were. It would be interesting now to match the students' perceptions with their feelings about the self-assessment procedure to determine if attitude towards the procedure is ~~a~~ variable that can inadvertly affect the accuracy of one's ability to assess his or her own proficiency.

Finally, the third group was composed of those students who felt badly upon completion of the questionnaire. Within this group the students who exhibited the most frustration were those in grades eight and nine (28.6%) This may be a consequence of their state of transition, i.e., those in grade eight have just left elementary school and those in grade nine are moving into high school. For this reason, they are in the "middle" so to speak of socio-affective development, whereby they question many things and are more apt to see their situation in a negative light. Consequently, their feeling towards the questionnaire may have been merely a reflection of the internal turmoil that is characteristic of this age, one typified by periods of critical self-reflection. Once again, it would be interesting to test this notion by exploring the effect of attitudes on self-assessment across grade level and age.

Summary of the results

In this part of the study, the prime goal was to examine students' attitudes towards the use of self-assessment as a means of better understanding their ability to comprehend and use their knowledge of French. Relating back to Hypothesis Six, it can be ascertained from the results obtained in this portion of the study that students, on the whole, have a positive attitude towards self-assessment as a means of assessing their proficency. In addition, within this context, students favored the administration of the procedure at both the beginning and the end of the year. Its administration at the beginning of the school year was viewed as a means by which a review of previously learned material could be obtained and as a sort of advanced organizer for future learning not only by the students, but by the teacher(s) as well. Further, its administration at both times of the year could provide students with valuable feedback on their progress, strengths and weaknesses, and areas needing improvement. In this regard, the vast majority of students felt good about the procedure in that it provided them with insight into what they are able and unable to do in the language, which for many did not deter them from seeking out more opportunities to improve their knowledge and use of the language. In essence, the self-assessment questionnaire was viewed as a useful, interesting, motivating ("fun" as one grade five student put it) and "understanding" questionnaire (stated by a grade seven student) that could be administered on a yearly basis. All these points are essential if students and teachers are to "buy into" the use of self-assessment at the classroom level.

Conclusions

As can been seen from the analysis of the data, the findings show that this study has only just begun to deal with the problem. It has truly been an exploratory study, since many questions have evolved as a result of this research which will need to be answered in order to comprehend better all the theoretical and practical considerations involved in any use of this procedure. These questions will be raised and discussed in Chapter Five. Nevertheless this study has proven, despite its limitations, the viability and reliability of the process. From the data, it has been demonstrated that students' success rate in their ability to assess their proficency accurately in the four language skills increases both chronologically and developmentally. At the lower grades and with younger age levels (Gardner,1978), students will require guided practice in order to be able to carry out successfully the procedure and to transpose the process to their repertoire of skills in procedural memory. At the higher grades and with older age levels, care must be taken to ensure that the students use the procedure to monitor and direct their future learning patterns in an ever increasing attempt to obtain autonomy over one's learning and acquisition of the second language. In this sense, students must be geared to developing their higher order thinking skills so that this reflective process becomes a monitoring device in their repetoire of metacognitive skills.

In addition, the self-assessment questionnaire must be viewed as a positive force in the students' daily learning schema such that they perceive it as a means of providing them with reliable information with regard to their progress, strengths and weaknesses, and areas in which are in need of improvement. It should provide incentive for future learning and make conscious the intrinsic motivation that is necessary for successful language learning.

In summary, the analysis of this study has shown that there is a viable place for self-assessment in the classroom at both the elementary and secondary levels of schooling. Students believe that it serves an important role in their education and it is on the basis of this belief that its use should be expanded in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Classroom Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This final chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will summarize the study with a description of the key findings. The second section will discuss the pedagogical implications this study has for the second language classroom. The final section will provide recommendations for future research in the study of self-assessment in second languages.

Summary Of The Study

Purpose of the study

The subjects involved in this study were school aged children which makes this research unique, since research in the area of self-assessment in second languages has focused primarily on adults. The purpose of the study was to determine if students in a Core French program, from Grades 4 to 12, were capable of accurately assessing their proficiency level in the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A secondary purpose was to determine what are the reactions and attitudes of students towards assessing their own proficiency. Based on the findings, the final purpose of the study was to explore the possibilities for the use of self-assessment as a practical evaluative tool for the second language classroom, in general, and more specifically for school aged children.

Methodology

This study took place in 6 schools in a small urban school district - four elementary, one junior high school and one senior high school. The sample was composed of those students who were enrolled in the district's French as a Second Language (Core) program. This study was composed of three parts: 1) the administration of a pen-and-pencil self-assessment questionnaire, specifically designed for this study, 2) a face-to-face validation of the students' perceptions, based on the self-assessment questionnaire, and 3) a face-to-face follow up attitudinal interview.

The self-assessment questionnaire was composed of sixty task-based or contextualized situations in which the students used a 5 point Likert scale to ascertain how well they thought they could perform in that specific situation. There were 15 questions for each of the four language skills - aural comprehension, oral production, reading and writing. The students' responses were recorded on optical scanning sheets which were later tallied to determine the students' perceptions of their proficiency levels in each of the four language skills. As part of the self-assessment questionnaire, students were also asked to supply information about their grade level, sex, and the number of years during which they had been enrolled in a French program. These would later become the variables to be used in the analysis of the data.

The validation aspect of the study consisted of an oral interview whose purpose was to determine the actual as opposed to the estimated level of the students' aural comprehension and oral production abilities. For the validation of their reading and writing skills, a four part reading/writing assignment, which was comprised of three random cloze exercises and one written composition was created. To obtain data on the students' attitudes and reactions towards self-assessment, an English interview composed of five questions was administered immediately after the French oral interview. The validation sample was obtained by selecting every fourth student on the basis of their self-assessment number at the elementary and junior high levels and every second self-assessment number at the senior high level owing to the small numbers enrolled in the program at this level. This sample numbered 272 students - 121 males and 151 females.

Once all the data had been obtained an analysis took place, involving a variety of tasks. The first task required the researcher to determine the proficiency ranges for the four language skills based on responses obtained from the self-assessment questionnaire. Once these ranges had been determined, the students were assigned a proficiency level based on their perception of their proficiency using the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines as a guide. The second task required the analysis of the reading and writing exercises which was done between two raters, the researcher and a second rater, to provide inter-rater reliability for the validation of the students' performance. The students were assigned a proficency rating based on their total number of "marks". The proficiency level ranges were determined by the raters who went through the process of ascertaining what a Novice could do, an Intermediate and so on. The final analysis involved the oral interview, which was a long and time consuming task. Using the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, the students' aural comprehension and oral production were determined by assigning a global assessment to what the students were able to do within the given time frame of the interview. At the same time, the English interview data was obtained and a frequency count of comments was carried out over the entire sample. In addition, any comments which the researcher felt were especially important were transcribed.

The data from the perceived perceptions and the actual performance of the students were analysed in terms of the difference between the two in terms of each of the four language skills. This data was analyzed to determine the degree to which the five hypotheses could be accepted. The acceptance or rejection of the sixth hypothesis was determined by the number of positive reactions obtained from the English Interview. The key findings are listed below.

Key findings of the study

The following are the principal findings of this study:

1. As students progress along a continuum of growth which encompasses their development cognitively, chronologically and emotionally, they become more accurate in their ability to assess their proficency in the four language skills.

2. Younger students exhibit more difficulty in assessing their proficency than do older students, which may be a consequence of their cognitive immaturity. In this regard, this may demonstrate that the metacognitive process involved may not be within the ability of these students and in order for this

process to be internalized at a higher thinking level it may be necessary to teach and train these students in the actual process itself.

3. Students who are moving towards adulthood tend to underestimate their abilities in the four language skills possibly owing to such factors as lack of self-confidence, societal demands placed on academic achievement, reflecting a behavioural pattern that is typical of adults who are asked to assess their abilities.

4. The students' ability to assess their proficiency in the four language skills appears to be contingent on the amount of emphasis given to a particular skill in the classroom. In this study, students were more accurate in their self- assessments in the receptive skills and in writing than in oral production. This was a pattern that was consistent over the four variables tested.

5. Gender is the only variable that appeared to be significant in this study as it pertained to students' ability to assess their proficiency in the four language skills. Girls were more able to assess their proficiency in general and more specifically in

the area of reading than were the boys. This may be owing to the fact that girls may employ an approach that is more intuitive in nature and focus more on communication than do boys.

6. Finally, students in the study support the concept of self-assessment observing that it provides them with insight into their abilities; it gives them the freedom to perceive themselves in a way that is nonthreatening; it furnishes them with information about their strengths and weaknesses; it demonstrates to them their progress and shows them where they have improved and what areas still need improving; and allows them to feel more responsible in their learning of the language while gaining more control and autonomy over their learning.

Proposed changes to the methodology of the study

In retrospect, there are very few changes which the researcher would make to this study. However, there are a few things which should have been done differently in order to improve the acquisition of the data and to solidify some of the findings.

The first area of concern lies in the validation procedures. In the oral proficiency interview one must consider the human factor and the chance of inconsistency in the administration of the procedure. Although the interviewers were trained in how to administer the interview, three of the five interviewers experienced difficulty with the process when they were in face to face contact with the students. While they understood the need to be sensitive and sympathetic to the students needs (Hughes, 1989, p.106), under the pressure of the actual testing they sometimes rushed the delivery of the questions or did not allow the students sufficient time to answer. During the scoring this was taken into account by the rater, but in many ways, this situation may have caused the students to become discouraged and possibly not produce a speech sample that was truly representative of their capabilities. Therefore, the researcher would strongly recommend that at least two different formats be used to elicit speech samples such as allowing the students to prepare a topic they would like to discuss as well as an impromptu session, such as the oral proficiency interview format, in order that as wide a range of speech acts as possible might be obtained to determine the students' proficiency levels in the area of oral production.

Secondly, in preparing interviewers, a greater emphasis must be placed on how to bring an interview to a gentle close when students are exhibiting difficulty, avoiding at all costs an abrupt ending, which may leave the students feeling ill at ease and incompetent, which is not the intent of the validation process. These problems occur largely owing to the interviewers' inexperience and their own uneasiness with the procedure itself. In addition, possibly due to the fact that these interviewers were native speakers, they may not have been as sensitive to second language learners' problems. Therefore, in order for this procedure to produce viable aural/oral language samples, it is imperative that the interviewers be thoroughly trained in interview protocol approaches in addition to a training session on second language learners' needs. A possible means of providing effective training is to employ the oral proficiency interview training procedure developed by ACTFL which is described in Chapter Two.

A second aspect of the validation procedure that could be improved is to increase the number of performance instruments used. In essence, the purpose of this research was to look at the four language skills on a more global and holistic fashion as opposed to each language skill as a separate entity. In other words, aural comprehension and oral production were maintained as a coherent package as was reading and writing, since it was the researcher's philosophical perspective that this is how these skills are inherently tied together in reality. However, it might have been more advantageous to have created separate tests for each of the skills, since the general contention in the field is that receptive skills should be developed before production skills, which would be more in keeping with reality at the classroom level. In this way, the results from these more specific tests could be combined with the global assessments to provide a more complete picture of the students' actual performance in each of the language skills.

In addition, this would allow for more flexibility with regard to different learning styles on the part of the students and greater accessibility to a variety of learning strategies be they cognitive, socio-affective or metacognitive and/or communicative strategies.

In the development of the test items in the validation procedure it is important to take into account the experiences of the students. This is one aspect that is essential to the validation procedures, since what one is looking for is proficiency in what is most known to the students and not that which is unknown. However, the degree of familiarity may have to be considered to a certain extent, because one question that has arisen as a result of this use of "familiar" contexts is: To what extent is a student's lack of familiarity with a certain experience such that it may contaminate the way in which the student reacts to the situation? This is a question which must be addressed in order to provide more reliable data. The best possible means of addressing this issue is to ensure that the same type of knowledge, be it declarative or procedural, is tested in at least two different ways. For example, the first rational cloze procedure asked the students' to complete the deletions of a school registration form, which means the students were being asked to supply declarative knowledge that is school related. This same knowledge could also be tested by asking the students to answer comprehension questions based on the information one would require to complete a school registration form. In this way, one would be able to ascertain if in fact the students' are familiar with the communicative task or not, by the manner in which they answer the questions. Therefore, the researcher recommends that in any validation procedure, at least one of the test items be tested in two different formats to ensure that the validation procedure is reliable and is free of possible contamination.

Another important factor that requires consideration is the timing of the entire study. As was seen in Chapter Three, the researcher related some suspicions with regard to the reliability of the students' answers given in the reading/writing part of the validation procedure. Since this aspect of the research is probably the easiest to administer, it is most advisable to give this portion of the study first and as close to the administration of the self-assessment questionnaire as possible so that as much time as is necessary can be given to the aural/oral portion of the study. This would more than likely avoid the situation that manifested itself in this study, i.e., the students' reluctance, especially the younger ones, to participate wholeheartedly in the study after an unsatisfactory experience with the oral interview. Therefore, if this study were to be repeated, the researcher would attempt to administer all testing procedures, both the self-assessment questionnaire and the validation procedures, well before the end of April.

Finally, in order to ascertain whether or not the context-based questions in the self-assessment questionnaire are truly indicative of the proficiency level they were slated for, the researcher would have liked to take the pilot students' questionnaire results and do a content analysis of their answers to see if in fact there is a match. In this way, the self-assessment questionnaire could be validated on its own and not within the context of the students' results. As it stands at the present time, it is the researcher's position that the self-assessment questionnaire is a sufficiently strong indicator of students' ability to assess their own proficiency. However, a validation procedure as mentioned above would have ensured its internal congruency and reliability.

One further note must be made at this time and this pertains to the district's organizational plan and its policy towards French Immersion transfer-ins. Prior to the replication of this study, it is advisable to investigate the possibility of these students being enrolled in the Core French program. In this regard, they can be eliminated from the sample at the beginning of the study so as to obtain as pure a sample of Core French students as possible.

These are, in essence, the major changes that the researcher would make in any replication of this study. The next section will discuss the pedagogical and practical implications which this study may have for the second language classroom.

Implications for the Second Language Classroom

Research in the area of self-assessment in second languages has been limited for the most part to adults, as was mentioned in previous chapters. The present study, however, was focused on school aged children. Such subjects demand an entirely different philosophy and teaching methodology from the one employed with adults. Furthermore, adults tend to be, for the most part, highly motivated and autonomous in their learning of a second language, since most often such study is related to personal or career aspirations. Students enrolled in a second language in their formal schooling years, on the other hand, are not necessarily as inspired to learn a second language and may not view its acquisition as an essential aspect of their daily lives. This is, unfortunately, the reality of the second language classroom. However, the study has suggested some new possibilities for the classroom and with them the possibility of the development of an important metacognitive skill which involves students in self-reflection and self-direction with regard to their learning of a second language. In turn, the use of self-assessment may enhance communicative competence specifically and language proficiency in general.

This study has shown that students are capable of assessing their own proficiency in the four language skills. Their accuracy, however, depends on their age, grade level, years of language study, emphasis of the skills in the classroom, and gender. As was seen, the younger students had more difficulty in assessing their proficiency than did the older students. In this regard, the question can be asked: To which group would the use of a self-assessment procedure be most beneficial? The answer would be all age groups, all grade levels, both sexes, and all years of study. However, the purpose and the focus of the procedure will change depending on the age, grade and years of study.

In the first place, if one considers that it is the high school students who are the most accurate in their assessments of their proficiency, then the question arises: how could self-assessment be beneficial to these students when they have developed already a fairly high cognitive and metacognitive level? There are two benefits which can be derived from the use of a self-assessment procedure. First and foremost, the students stated that the questionnaire brought to their conscious level a number of things: 1) they felt that they were able to determine their strengths and weaknesses by using the questionnaire; 2) it was another form of relating progress without the stigma of a "mark', i.e. they were able to determine what they had and had not attained without the red marks. This self-reliance gave them a sense of satisfaction and a form of inner power in that they took on the role of the "significant other"; and 3) it gave them an opportunity to assess their abilities in real life contexts without the threat of ridicule or embarrassment, i.e. they were able to take the risk of answering the questions without the added pressure of being judged for a correct or incorrect response. In addition, it personalized the evaluation process, since the students were doing it themselves, not some external evaluator and so might offer stronger motivation for improved learning. In sum, all of this benefits these students, both socio-affectively and cognitively, because the process gives them the opportunity to determine for themselves what they know and to make the appropriate decisions for improving and strengthening their declarative and procedural knowledge. In this way, self-assessment can cater to and enhance the variety of learning styles and learning needs, emotive and cognitive, that students who are studying a second language bring with them to the classroom situation.

A second aspect that self-assessment at this level can address is placement. At the present time, Alberta occupies a unique position in that it is the only province in Canada which offers three different Core French programs. This has ramifications for many school districts similar to the one in the study which has opted to offer two of the three programs: one that begins at grade four and the other at grade ten for those who have not studied French previously. However, the reality of the classroom situation at the high school level is that the students who are enrolled in these programs are far from being beginners. In this study a few students had stated that they had decided to begin their study of French again, because they had either dropped out of the program at the end of grade seven or came from other school districts where they were offered only a smattering of the language for a number of reasons, including low student enrollments, lack of a qualified French teacher, and so on. With these problems in mind, a self -assessment procedure which is based on communicative tasks, which are relevant to and targeted for these students, could be used to place these students in second language programs which are conducive to their needs and previous language experience. Needless to say, this would only be a "rough" placement, since it is based on the students' perceptions of their abilities. Nevertheless, the self-assessment questionnaire could serve as a diagnostic tool that is non-threatening in nature, since no mark is given; rather a proficency level is assessed.

Futhermore, this information could serve a dual purpose: 1) as a self-diagnostic tool for the students and 2) as a placement test for teachers, since the self-assessment test could provide them with a global perception of the students' abilities and an opportunity to reflect on what program would best suit the needs of these same students. This could lead to further decisions as to the type of classroom planning which would be required to facilitate the needs of these students and enhance their chances of being more successful language learners. Therefore, at the junior, or more especially at the senior high school level, the administration of a self-assessment questionnaire could be used to assist students in raising to a conscious level their declarative and procedural knowledge with the purpose of self-diagnosing their strengths, weaknesses and progress, in addition to supplying teachers with information on their students' abilities.

For the younger students self-assessment cannot be used in the same manner which was described above. The study has shown that these students tend very much to overestimate their abilities. Therefore, it could not be used for either diagnostic or placement purposes; however, it can serve a different purpose. Gardner's work, as cited in Chapter Four, has demonstrated that higher thinking skills can be taught to students at this level, and that they can be successful at retaining these skills. However, one could argue that self-assessment is a highly complicated metacognitive process and that students at this age and grade level should not be asked to use a strategy which is well above their cognitive ability. Nevertheless, what the procedure brings to the students' general learning is an appreciation of what they know, since for the most part these students tend to feel good about what they consider to be their progress. One could counter the argument by stating that we are supplying these students with an untrue picture of these abilities. This would be a fair statement; however, what we are building is self-esteem and the willingness to take on a greater responsibility for the learning of the language. In other words, the use of self-assessment at this level would be more to teach students the process. In addition, we would be encouraging the students to take more risks in the target language so as to foster their learning of the language, while building more autonomy.

From this perspective, it can be seen that this procedure can be a viable instrument for both students and teachers. However, its use is limited in the sense that the reliability of the responses must be viewed as "rough" or "global", since it is the students themselves who have made the assessments.

However, as the study as shown, the reliability of these results increases with age, grade level and years of language study, which implies that there is the possibility of using the questionnaire as a preliminary placement test for students entering into the French program for the first time, or to place students who have had previous experience with the language.

The two greatest implications for the use of self -assessment in the classroom lie in: 1) its acceptability by both teachers and students as a viable means of relating student progress in the knowledge and use of the language and 2) its misuse or overuse. In this regard, if the procedure is perceived as a "fun" activity and is not accorded any educational value it will eventually lose its motivational appeal. Further, its overuse will soon cause students to lose interest in the procedure because it has become mundane or redundant. Therefore, teachers must judge when and how often it is appropriate to administer a self-assessment procedure. Also, teachers must take into consideration the purpose behind the questionnaire, i.e., what information does the teacher want the students to obtain from the procedure, and how will s/he know that this information has been raised to a conscious level. In this vein, teachers will have to determine a validation procedure which will validate the information they wish to verify. Despite these constraints, however, there is great educational value in using self-assessment in the classroom in that it increases motivation and develops autonomous learners.

Recommendations for Future Research

As has been seen by the analysis of Chapter Four, this research study has been exploratory in nature. In essence, it has demonstrated the need to study the affects of self-assessment over longer periods of time in order to ascertain its long term affects. Consequently many new areas of research have evolved from this study. To facilitate the discussion of the recommendations, they will be formulated in terms of research questions.

The first questions that have arisen out of this study revolve around the roles of cognition, metacognition and self-assessment. One might ask, to what extent does cognition facilitate the comprehension of a self-assessment questionnaire specifically and in more general terms, the process itself? Are age and cognitive maturity inherently tied to the ability to assess oneself accurately in the four language skills or are these two separate variables independent of each other? How does one's language experience, in terms of procedural and declarative knowledge, affect the capacity to assess one's proficiency accurately in the four language skills? Does directed practice in self-assessment procedures enhance and improve a student's ability to assess his/her abilities with more accuracy? Do the practice sessions raise to a conscious level the metacognitive strategies used in a self-assessment procedure? Does self-assessment have a marked effect on a student's ability to comprehend and use the language better after having employed the procedure? As can be seen, the study of the roles of cognition and metacognition in self-assessment procedures are important in that they can provide insight into the use of thinking skills and reflection in order to enhance the students' comprehension and use of the target language.

The second major area of study is that of gender. This study has demonstrated that there was a marked gender difference in the ability to assess accurately one's proficiency in the four language skills, especially in the area of reading. Therefore, research in this area might focus around the following questions: 1) Is there a language preference in reading between the two sexes?, 2) If there is, how does this affect the students' ability to assess their own proficiency accurately?, 3) Does one's gender determine one's preference for receptive skills over productive skills and if it does, how does this in turn affect a person's ability to assess with accuracy one's preference over one' s non-preference?, 4) Do girls' chronological age and cognitive development facilitate their ability to be more accurate in their self-assessments than is the case for boys?, 5) Are girls more motivated to complete a self-assessment questionnaire for communicative reasons or for social reasons than are boys? and 6) Do boys have difficulty in assessing their proficiency in the four language skills owing to their tendency to be logical or is it more a pragmatic issue? These questions demonstrate the need for more study in this area.

Finally, the third area of concentration deals with the field of attitudes. It would be interesting, based on the results of this study, to determine how students' feelings affect the accuracy of their self-assessments. In this way, information on the effect of the socio-affective aspects of learning a second language might be obtained. According to Blanche and Merino (1990), research in the area of attitudes and personality as they relate to self-assessment has been limited in scope, dealing mostly with the effects of aptitude on achievement in a second language. In these particular cases, a self-assessment questionnaire was used as a test instrument and not as the focus of the study. Therefore, research questions regarding this aspect could be the following: 1) How do students' attitudes, both positive and negative, towards the learning of the target language, affect their ability to assess accurately their proficiency?, 2) Does motivation play a major role in the accuracy of a student's self -assessment of his/her own proficiency?, and 3) Are certain personality types more accurate in their assessments of their own proficiency than others? As is evident by these questions, the entire area of personality and attitudes has largely been ignored in self-assessment studies in second languages. Therefore, there is much work to be done in the study of personality and attitudes as they relate to self-assessment and the final goal - learner autonomy.

In summary, there are three key areas of research that have evolved as a result of this study - 1) the roles of cognition and metacognition as they relate to self -assessment, 2) the role of gender in one's ability to assess accurately one's own abilities in the target language and 3) the function of personality and attitude in determining one's ability to be successful int assessing one's own proficiency in the four language skills. These areas need to be addressed if we intend to know the full range of effects of self-assessment on our second languages learners.

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APPENDIX 1

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

PERMISSION LETTER

10458 - 21 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada
T6J 5A3

Mr. C. Edward Scebold
American Council on the Teaching of
Foreign Languages Inc.
579 Broadway
Hastings-On-Hudson, NY 10706
U.S.A.
August 26, 1989

Approved
10-7-89

Dear Mr. Scebold

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta and I am presently finishing my Master's thesis in Second Languages. The research I am working on deals with self-assessment and student proficiency levels in the Core French program. In order to assist the validation process of the students' perceptions of their abilities in French, I used the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as they appear in a document published by Alberta Education entitled, Framework for a Proficiency-Based Second Language Curriculum. I would now like to ask your written permission to reprint these guidelines in the appendix of my thesis so that anyone reading my thesis will be able to resort to these guidelines if the need arises.

I hope you will be able to assist me in this matter as soon as possible as I am nearing the completion of my thesis and I require you written consent prior to publishing my work.

I thank you in advance for attending to this matter. I hope I will not have caused you any inconvenience.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Caouette

Lisa Caouette

received
9/12/89

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - SPEAKING

NOVICE	The Novice level is characterized by an ability to communicate minimally with learned material.
Novice-Low	Oral production consists of isolated words ~~and~~ perhaps a few high-frequency phrases. Essentially no functional communicative ability.
Novice-Mid	Oral production continues to consist of isolated words and learned phrases within very predictable areas of need, although quantity is increased. Vocabulary is suffcient only for handling simple, elementary needs and expressing basic courtesies. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and show frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words. Speaker may have some difficulty producing even the simplest utterances. Some Novice-Mid speakers will be understood only with great difficulty.
Novice-High	Able to satisfy partially the requirements of basic communicative exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances but occasionally expanding these through simple recombinations of their elements. Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material. Shows signs of spontaneity, although this falls short of real autonomy of expression. Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones. Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and most common kinship terms. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by first language. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice-High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - SPEAKING

INTERMEDIATE

The Intermediate level is characterized by an ability to:

- create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode;
- initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks; and,
- ask and answer questions.

Intermediate-Low

Able to handle successfully a limited number of interactive, task-oriented and social situations. Can ask and answer questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain face-to-face conversation, although in a highly restricted manner and with much linguistic inaccuracy. Within these limitations, can perform such tasks as introducing self, ordering a meal, asking directions, and making purchases. Vocabulary is adequate to express only the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language may occur. Misunderstandings frequently arise, but with repetition, the Intermediate-Low speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated, basic and communicative tasks and social situations. Can talk simply about self and family members. Can ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs; e.g., personal history and leisure time activities. Utterance length increased slightly, but speech may continue to be characterized by frequent long pauses, since the smooth incorporation of even basic conversational strategies is often hindered as the speaker struggles to create appropriate language forms. Pronunciation may continue to be strongly influenced by first language and fluency may still be strained. Although misunderstandings still arise, the Intermediate-Mid speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - SPEAKING

Intermediate-High

Able to handle successfully most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations. Can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The Intermediate-High speaker can generally be understood even by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speaking at this level, but repetition may still be required.

ADVANCED

The Advanced level is characterized by an ability to:

- converse in a clearly participatory fashion;
- initiate, sustain, and bring to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or an unforeseen turn of events;
- satisfy the requirements of school and work situations; and,
- narrate and describe with paragraph-length connected discourse.

Advanced

Able to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine school and work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining, and apologizing. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings can often be smoothed over by communicative strategies,

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - SPEAKING

such as pause fillers, stalling devices, and different rates of speech. Circumlocution which arises from vocabulary or syntactic limitations very often is quite successful, though some groping for words may still be evident. The Advanced level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors.

Advanced-Plus

Able to satisfy the requirements of a broad variety of everyday, school, and work situations. Can discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms with confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing and circumlocution. Differentiated vocabulary and intonation are effectively used to communicate fine shades of meaning. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under the demands of Superior level, complex tasks, language may break down or prove inadequate.

SUPERIOR

The Superior level is characterized by an ability to:

- participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics; and,
- support opinions and hypothesize using native-like discourse strategies.

Superior

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topic.. Usually the Superior level speaker is only partially familiar with regional or other dialectical variants. The Superior level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. The latter involves the ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical, and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). Sporadic errors may occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterns of error are evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - LISTENING

Novice-Low	Understanding is limited to occasional isolated words, such as cognates, borrowed words, and high-frequency social conventions. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.
Novice-Mid	Able to understand some short, learned utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends some words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands and courtesy formulae about topics that refer to basic personal information or the immediate physical setting. The listener requires long pauses for assimilation and periodically requests repetition and/or a slower rate of speech.
Novice-High	Able to understand short, learned utterances and some sentence-length utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands, and courtesy

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - LISTENING

	formulae. May require repetition, rephrasing and/or a slower rate of speech for comprehension.
Intermediate-Low	Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned elements in a limited number of content areas, particularly if strongly supported by the situational context. Content refers to basic personal background and needs, social conventions, and routine tasks, such as getting meals and receiving simple instructions and directions. Listening tasks pertain primarily to spontaneous face-to-face conversations. Understanding is often uneven; repetition and rewording may be necessary. Misunderstandings in both main ideas and details arise frequently.
Intermediate-Mid	Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. Content continues to refer primarily to basic personal background and needs, social conventions, and somewhat more complex tasks, such as lodging, transportation, and shopping. Additional content areas include some personal interests and activities, and a greater diversity of instructions and directions. Listening tasks not only pertain to spontaneous face-to-face conversations but also to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech, such as simple announcements and reports over the media. Understanding continues to be uneven.
Intermediate High	Able to sustain understanding over longer stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places; however, understanding is inconsistent due to failure to grasp main ideas and/or details. Thus, while topics do not differ significantly from those of an Advanced level listener, comprehension is less in quantity and poorer in quality.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - LISTENING

Advanced

Able to understand main ideas and most details of connected discourse on a variety of topics beyond the immediacy of the situation. Comprehension may be uneven due to a variety of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, among which topic familiarity is very prominent. These texts frequently involve description and narration in different time frames or aspects, such as present, nonpast, habitual, or imperfective. Texts may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics, and news items and reports primarily dealing with factual information. Listener is aware of cohesive devices but may not be able to use them to follow the sequence of thought in an oral text.

Advanced-Plus

Able to understand the main ideas of most speech in a standard dialect; however, the listener may not be able to sustain comprehension in extended discourse which is propositionally and linguistically complex. Listener shows an emerging awareness of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the text but may fail to grasp sociocultural nuances of the message.

Superior

Able to understand the main ideas of all speech in a standard dialect, including technical discussion in a field of specialization. Can follow the essentials of extended discourse which is propositionally and linguistically complex, as in academic/professional settings, in lectures, speeches, and reports. Listener shows some appreciation of aesthetic norms of target language, of idioms, colloquialisms, and register shifting. Able to make inferences within the cultural framework of the target language. Understanding is aided by an awareness of the underlying organizational structure of the oral text and includes sensitivity for its social and cultural references and its affective overtones. Rarely misunderstands but may not understand excessively rapid,

	highly colloquial speech or speech that has strong cultural references.
Distinguished	Able to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to personal, social, and professional needs tailored to different audiences. Shows strong sensitivity to social and cultural references and aesthetic norms by processing language from within the cultural framework. Texts include theater plays, screen productions, editorials, symposia, academic debates, public policy statements, literary readings, and most jokes and puns. May have difficulty with some dialects and slang.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - READING

Novice-Low	Able occasionally to identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.
Novice-Mid	Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words, where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.
Novice-High	Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - READING

context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.

Intermediate-Low

Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for example, chronological sequencing. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes or information for the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.

Intermediate-High

Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts and the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - READING

	at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.
Advanced	Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but also from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader.
Advanced-Plus	Able to follow essential points of written discourse at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex, and/or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target-language culture. Able to comprehend the facts to make appropriate inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permits comprehension of a wider variety of texts, including literary. Misunderstandings may occur.
Superior	Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although the reader is not expected to comprehend thoroughly texts which are highly dependent on knowledge of the target culture. Reads easily for pleasure. Superior level texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, and supported opinions and include grammatical patterns and

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - READING

vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic/professional reading. At this level, due to the control of general vocabulary and structure, the reader is almost always able to match the meanings derived from extralinguistic knowledge with meanings derived from knowledge of the language, allowing for smooth and efficient reading of diverse texts. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur; for example, the reader may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. At the Superior level the reader can match strategies, top-down or bottom-up, which are most appropriate to the text. (Top-down strategies rely on real-world knowledge and prediction based on the genre and organizational scheme of the text. Bottom-up strategies rely on actual linguistic knowledge.) Material at this level will include a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary, and misreading is rare.

Distinguished

Able to read fluently and accurately most styles and forms of the language pertinent to academic and professional needs. Able to relate inferences in the text to real-world knowledge and understand almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references by processing language from within the cultural framework. Able to understand a writer's use of nuance and subtlety. Can readily follow unpredictable turns of thought and author intent in such materials as sophisticated editorials, specialized journal articles, and literary texts such as novels, plays, poems, as well as in any subject matter area directed to the general reader.

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - WRITING

Novice-Low	Able to form some letters in an alphabetic system. In languages whose writing systems use syllabaries or characters, writer is able to both copy and produce the basic strokes. Can produce romanization of isolated characters, where applicable.
Novice-Mid	Able to copy or transcribe words or phrases and reproduce some from memory. No practical communicative writing skills.
Novice-High	Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material and some recombinations thereof. Can supply information on simple forms and documents. Can write names, numbers, dates, own nationality, and other simple autobiographical information as well as some short phrases and simple lists. Can write all the symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50-100 characters or compounds in a character writing system. Spelling and representation of symbols (letters, syllables, characters) may be partially correct.
Intermediate-Low	Able to meet limited practical writing needs. Can write short messages, postcards, and take down simple notes, such as telephone messages. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences on very familiar topics. Language is inadequate to express in writing anything but elementary needs. Frequent errors in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and in formation of nonalphabetic

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS - WRITING

symbols, but writing can be understood by natives used to the writing of nonnatives.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to meet a number of practical writing needs. Can write short, simple letters. Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience. Can express present time or at least one other time frame or aspect consistently, e.g., nonpast, habitual, imperfective. Evidence of control of the syntax of noncomplex sentences and basic inflectional morphology, such as declensions and conjugation. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization. Can be understood by natives used to the writing of nonnatives.

Intermediate-High

Able to meet most practical writing needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience. In those languages relying primarily on content words and time expressions to express time, tense, or aspect, some precision is displayed; where tense and/or aspect is expressed through verbal inflection, forms are produced rather consistently, but not always accurately. An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging. Rarely uses basic cohesive elements, such as pronominal substitutions or synonyms in written discourse. Writing, though faulty, is generally comprehensible to natives used to the writing of nonnatives.

Advanced

Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Has sufficient

	writing vocabulary to express self simply with some circumlocution. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols. Good control of the morphology and the most frequently used syntactic structures, e.g., common word order patterns, coordination, subordination, but makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately. Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging. Writing is understandable to natives not used to the writing of nonnatives.
Advanced-Plus	Able to write about a variety of topics with significant precision and in detail. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully but has difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse. Can write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure writing may be inaccurate. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling or character writing formation may result in occasional miscommunication. Some misuse of vocabulary may still be evident. Style may still be obviously foreign.
Superior	Able to express self effectively in most formal and informal writing on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos as well as social and business letters, and short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or nonalphabetic symbol production, and a wide general

vocabulary allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed and/or not totally reflecting target language patterns. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely to a variety of purposes and/or readers. Errors in writing rarely disturb natives or cause miscommunication.

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT LETTER

CONSENT LETTER

1989 03 15

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

is presently engaged in a review of the French Core Program. The purpose of the review is to find out the effectiveness of our present programs and to provide direction for the future. We would like to administer a self-assessment questionnaire to all students in the Core French program to determine the students' perception of their own progress.

An oral interview and a reading/writing assessment will be administered to a random sample of the students in order to validate the findings. All information obtained will be kept confidential and anonimity of the students will be guaranteed.

The data obtained will in no way affect the students' regular mark and will be used solely for research purposes. Every attempt will be made to not interfere with the regular school program.

The survey is being conducted in conjunction with the Faculty of Education's Second Language Department of the University of Alberta and will be administered during the month of April, 1989.

Thank you for your cooperation. If, however, you do not wish your child(ren) to be part of the survey, please sign this letter and return it to your school.

University of Alberta
Research Assistant

Director of District Services

Parent signature (only if you do not wish your child to participate).

Parent's signature

School child(ren) attend

APPENDIX 3

TEST INSTRUMENTS

Example

1. If you heard " un, deux, trois, qutre, cinq, et." could you recognize these words as being numbers?

Self-Assessment Questionnaire for
Core French Students

INSTRUCTIONS

When you are reading the questions, remember that you **must** be able to do this task in French, **not in English**. Please read each question slowly and carefully. Be sure to answer each question as best you can. Make sure you read the scale for each section. If you have more than five **e's**, then you **do not** have to continue in this section, go on to the next section. Please use only an **Hb pencil** to fill in the **Optical Scoring Sheet.**

Listening (Aural Comprehension)

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all.

b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details.

d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all.

e. I would not understand anything at all.

Questions:

1. If you heard two people speaking in French, could you recognize the language as being French?

2. If I were describing my room, could you understand what I have in there?

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all.

b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details.

d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all.

e. I would not understand anything at all.

---

3. If you were listening to the weather report, could you understand what the weather is going to be like?

4. If the Prime Minister was discussing his political beliefs, could you understand what he believes?

5. If I were to introduce a new student to you, could you understand his/her name?

6. If I were to explain how to get from your classroom to the office, could you understand the instructions so that you could go there immediately?

7. If I were to give you my telephone number, one number at a time over the telephone, could you write it down?

8. If you heard the score in a NHL hockey game, could you tell which team won the game?

9. If I spoke to you about my trip to France last year, could you understand my oral report?

10. If you were listening to a restaurant commercial on radio, could you understand why this is a good restaurant to eat at?

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all.

b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details.

d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all.

e. I would not understand anything at all.

---

11. If you were listening to the radio and the disc jockey was giving away two free tickets to a concert, could you understand what to do to win them?

12. If a sales clerk was showing you two different Walkmans, could you understand which of the two was of better quality?

13. If you heard two native French speakers discussing **Acid Rain**, could you understand their opinions?

14. If you were listening to a French rock song, could you understand the words?

15. If your teacher told you, in French, to write a paragraph on yourself, could you understand the instructions?

END OF SECTION. PLEASE CONTINUE.

Oral

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble getting my point across and would not make any mistakes.

b. I would have no trouble getting my point across, but I would make a few mistakes.

c. I would have some trouble getting my point across and I would make several mistakes.

d. I would have a lot of trouble getting my point across and I would make many mistakes.

e. I could not say anything.

Questions:

16. Could you tell someone what time it is?

17. Could you name the members of your family?

18. Could you tell me why it is important to go to school?

19. Could you tell me what you did last night?

20. Could you order lunch at a fast-food place?

21. Could you greet someone in French?

22. I am a tourist and I have heard about West Edmonton Mall, but I do not know anything about it. Could you describe it in as much detail as possible so that I would want to visit the mall?

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble getting my point across and would not make any mistakes.

b. I would have no trouble getting my point across, but I would make a few mistakes.

c. I would have some trouble getting my point across and I would make several mistakes.

d. I would have a lot of trouble getting my point across and I would make many mistakes.

e. I could not say anything.

---

23. If you missed school yesterday, could you tell me why you were away?

24. If you were lost, could you tell a policeman where you live?

25. If you needed to go to the bank, could you ask for directions?

26. If you were sick, could you tell the doctor what hurts?

27. Could you ask a friend to go with you to the movies?

28. If I were to try and sell you a new coat, could you tell me why you do not want to buy it without hurting my feelings?

29. Could you give an oral report on your favorite hobby?

30. Could you give me your opinions on **Acid Rain**?

END OF SECTION. PLEASE CONTINUE.

READING COMPREHENSION

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble reading at all.

b. I could read and understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could read some of the details, but I could not read and understand the finer points without the help of a dictionnary.

d. I could read a few words, but that is all.

e. I could not read anything.

Questions:

31. Could you read a bus schedule to find out when the next bus leaves the bus stop you are at? (Ex. Numéro 11 - 8 h)?

32. Could you read a list of classroom objects?

33. Could you read a T.V. guide and know when your favorite T.V. show begins?

34. Could you read the cleaning instructions for your favorite blouse or shirt, when the cleaning symbols are not there?

35. Could you read a paragraph to find the most important point in the paragraph?

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble reading at all.

b. I could read and understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details.

c. I could read some of the details, but I could not read and understand the finer points without the help of a dictionnary.

d. I could read a few words, but that is all.

e. I could not read anything.

---

36. Could you read your school registration form and know where your name goes on the form?

37. Could you read the Prime Minister's opening speech to Parliment?

38. Could you read the headlines of the front page of a French newspaper and know what the news is about?

39. Could you read a classified ad that describes a 10 speed bike for sale?

40. Could you read a map of Paris and find the Louvre?

41. Could you read a dinner menu in a not too expensive restaurant?

42. Could you read your horoscope?

43. Could you read a report on **Disneyland**?

44. Could you read the instructions on how to care for your new pet?

45. Could you read a paragraph written in French by a friend *who is French*?

END OF THIS SECTION. PLEASE GO ON.

Writing

Scale:

a. I would not have trouble writing and I would not make any mistakes.

b. I would have a little trouble writing, but I would make a few mistakes.

c. I would have some trouble writing and I would make a fair number of mistakes.

d. I would have a lot of trouble writing and I would make many mistakes.

e. I could not write anything at all.

Questions:

46. Could you address an envelope to a friend in France?

47. Could you write a paragraph about your family?

48. Could you write the correct form of **le, la, l', les** in a fill-in the blank exercise?

49. Could you write down, in sentence form, what you had for supper last night?

50. If you were going grocery shopping with your mother, could you write down the grocery list?

51. Could you fill in your subjects on your timetable in French?

Scale:

a. I would not have trouble writing and I would not make any mistakes.

b. I would have a little trouble writing, but I would make a few mistakes.

c. I would have some trouble writing and I would make a fair number of mistakes.

d. I would have a lot of trouble writing and I would make many mistakes.

e. I could not write anything at all.

---

52. Could you write down instructions on how to use your locker combination?

53. Could you write down your opinion on **Acid Rain**?

54. Could you write down the months of the year?

55. Could you write down today's weather report?

56. Could you write a poem in French?

57. Could you write a report on **Disneyland**?

58. Could you write a letter to a person in France?

59. Could you write a list of the things you would buy if you won $10,000?

60. Could you write an advertisement that would let people know that you could babysit on the weekends only?

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

PROFICIENCY LEVEL ALLOCATION FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

(Numbers in brackets denote value of answer.)

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble understanding at all. **(5)**
b. I could understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details. **(4)**
c. I could understand most of what was being said, but I would miss several details. **(3)**
d. I could pick out a few words I know, but that is all. **(2)**
e. I would not understand anything at all. **(1)**

1. NOVICE-LOW
2. NOVICE-HIGH
3. INTERMEDIATE-LOW
4. SUPERIOR
5. NOVICE-MID
6. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
7. NOVICE-LOW
8. NOVICE-HIGH
9. ADVANCED-PLUS
10. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
11. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
12. ADVANCED
13. SUPERIOR
14. SUPERIOR
15. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH

ORAL PRODUCTION

(Numbers in brackets denote value of answer.)

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble getting my point across and would not make any mistakes. **(5)**
b. I would have no trouble getting my point across, but I would make a few mistakes. **(4)**
c. I would have some trouble getting my point across and I would make several mistakes. **(3)**
d. I would have a lot of trouble getting my point across and I would make many mistakes. **(2)**
e. I could not say anything. **(1)**

16. NOVICE-MID
17. NOVICE-MID
18. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
19. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
20. NOVICE-HIGH
21. NOVICE-LOW
22. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
23. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
24. NOVICE-HIGH
25. NOVICE-HIGH
26. INTERMEDIATE-LOW
27. INTERMEDIATE-MID
28. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
29. ADVANCED
30. SUPERIOR

READING COMPREHENSION

(Numbers in brackets denote value of answer.)

Scale:

a. I would have no trouble reading at all. **(5)**
b. I could read and understand the entire message, but I would miss a few details. **(4)**
c. I could read some of the details, but I could not read and understand the finer points without the help of a dictionnary. **(3)**
d. I could read a few words, but that is all. **(2)**
e. I could not read anything. **(1)**

31. NOVICE-HIGH
32. NOVICE-MID
33. NOVICE HIGH
34. INTERMEDIATE-MID
35. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
36. NOVICE-MID
37. SUPERIOR
38. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
39. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
40. NOVICE-HIGH
41. INTERMEDIATE-LOW
42. ADVANCED
43. ADVANCED
44. ADVANCED
45. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH

WRITING

(Numbers in brackets denote value of answer.)

Scale:

a. I would not have trouble writing and I would not make any mistakes. **(5)**
b. I would have a little trouble writing, but I would make a few mistakes. **(4)**
c. I would have some trouble writing and I would make a fair number of mistakes. **(3)**
d. I would have a lot of trouble writing and I would make many mistakes. **(2)**

e. I could not write anything at all. (1)

47. NOVICE-HIGH
48. INTERMEDIATE-MID
49. INTERMEDIATE-LOW
50. NOVICE-HIGH
51. NOVICE-HIGH
52. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH
53. SUPERIOR
54. NOVICE-MID
55. NOVICE-HIGH
56. ADVANCED
57. ADVANCED
58. INTERMEDIATE-MID
59. NOVICE-HIGH
60. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH

FRENCH AND ENGLISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview A

1. Mise-en-train: Bonjour. Comment ça va? Quel âge as-tu? C'est quand ton anniversaire? (Des questions personnelles)

2. Questions personnelles (La famille): Combien de frères ou de soeur as-tu? Comment s'appelle(nt)-t-il (elle) (-ils, elles)? Quel âge a-t-il (a-t-elle, ont-ils)? Où habites-tu? Tes parents, où travaillent-ils? etc.

3. Situation: Tu as faim. Alors, tu entres dans un McDonalds. Que prends-tu pour le déjeuner? Pourquoi? Alors, ton ordre, ça coûte combien?

4. Situation: Je suis touriste. Hier soir, j'ai visité le musée provincial. Maintenant, j'aimerais connaître le centre d'achats West Edmonton Mall. Décris-le s'il te plaît. (En utilisant la déscription poser d'autres questions qui s'appliquent à la situation).

5. Situation: La pluie acide a commencé à détruire l'environ canadien et à mon avis, les Etats-Unis doivent aider le Canada à combattre ce problème. Que penses-tu? Quelles sont tes idées pour remédier cette grave situation?

Interview B

1. Mise-en-train: Bonjour. Comment ça va? (continuer comme Interview A)

2. Questions personnelles (l'école): Aimes-tu l'école? Pourquoi/pourquoi pas? Quelle est ta matière favorite? Pourquoi l'aimes-tu? Quelle matière n'aimes-tu pas? Pourquoi?

3. Situation: Imagine que tu n'es pas venu(e) à l'école hier soir. Dis-moi pourquoi.

4. Situation: Mon enfant déteste l'école. J'ai essayé de lui expliquer pourquoi il doit y aller. Malheureusement, il ne m'écoute pas. Peut-être tu peux m'aider. Explique-moi pourquoi tu penses que c'est important d'aller à l'école.

5. Situation: Le monde électronique a fait la vie plus simple. Que penses-tu de toutes ces innovations? Et comment sera la vie en 2050?

Interview C

1. Mise-en-train: comme A et B.

2. Situation: Dans ma chambre, j'ai un lit jumeau, une lampe grise, une grande armoire, des affiches de mon chanteur favori, un ordinateur, un pupitre et mes vingt animaux de peluche. Qu'as-tu dans ta chambre?

3. Questions personnelles: Regardes-tu la télévision? Quelle est ton programme favori (émission favorite)? Pourquoi l'aimes-tu? Qui est ton caractère favori de ce programme (cette émission)? Que fait-il (elle) pour que tu l'aimes?

4. Situation: Hier, tu es allé(e) au centre d'achats et tu as acheté un nouveau manteau , mais aujourd'hui tu décides que tu ne l'aimes plus. Explique à moi (le vendeur/la vendeuse) la raison pour laquelle tu veux la rembourser?*

5. Situation: Le gouvernment a choisi d'instaler un impôt fédéral pour toutes les provinces et les térritoires du Canada. Penses-tu qu'un impôt (tax) fédéral serait la solution pour diminuer le déficit? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas? (Demander une réponse basée sur les faits).

* Comme changement, changer l'objet pour un Walkman qui ne marche plus et l'étudiant(e) doit expliquer le problème.

English Interview Questions

1. Why did you think you had to fill out the self-assessment questionnaire?
2. Did you feel that the questionnaire told you anything about what you could do in French? If so, what did it tell you?
3. What do you feel that the questionnaire did not tell you?
4. Do you think that a self-assessment questionnaire should be something you should be given before you start your French classe at the beginning of the year or should it only be given at the end of the year? If student answers: It should not be given at all or something to the same effect, ASK the following QUESTION: **Why do you feel a self-assessment questionnaire should not be given**?
5. Did the self-assessment questionnaire make you feel good about what you can do in French or did it make you feel bad? HAVE STUDENT CLARIFY RESPONSE with the QUESTION: **Why do you feel this way**?
6. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the self-assessment questionnaire? If student says: " Yes", continue to probe student for response. If student says: "No", **thank him/her politely** for assisting in the study.

Assessment II: Reading and Writing

Assessment II - Lecture et Ecriture

DEMANDE D'INSCRIPTION A UNE ECOLE FRANÇAISE

Répondez à toutes les questions de la formulaire, s'il vous plaît.

A. LeBlanc — Raymond — Georges
Nom de famille — Prénom — Autres prénoms

B. LeBlanc, Jacques — LeBlanc [1.]
Nom de [2.] — Nom de mère

C. [3.]
232, [4.] La Montagne
Montréal, [5.]
[6.], Province
M1Y 2R3
[7.] postal

D. Numéro de [8.] domicile: 678-9001

E. Date de naissance: le [9.], 1975

F. Age: 13 [10.]

G. Numéro de personnes dans la [11.] - six personnes deux parents, quatre [12.]: un [13]. trois filles

H. Matière favorite à l'école: [14.]

I. Sport préfére: [15.]

(Continuer s'il vous plaît).

UN ARTICLE POUR LE JOURNAL DE VOTRE ECOLE

L'éditeur du journal de votre école a oublié de lire ton article avant de l'imprimer: Ecrivez les mots qui manquent.

A VENDRE

URGENT!

Une bicyclette à 10 vitesses à vendre,
[16.],[17.].
(nationalité) (couleur)
prèsque [18.] je l' [19.]
achetée à [20.] dollars, je demande
250 dollars, conduite seulement 1200 [21].
condition [22.].
Pour [23.] ou pour mettre
une[24.], téléphonez à 333 - 0033,
lundi à [25.], après six
[26. ou [27.] week-end,
[28. dix heures du [29.]
et une [30.] de l'après-midi. Ou si je ne
[31.] pas là, laissez un message
[32.] ma [33.].
Merci [34.]

(Continuer s'il vous plaît).

UN NOUVEAU DISNEYLAND POUR L'AN 1992

Vous trouvez cet article dans un journal français, mais il y trop de mots qui manquent. C'est votre tâche de les remplacer pour gagner le grand prix.

Nous sommes très bien familier avec le nom Disney. C'était un [____35.____] qui a [____36.____] fait pour les enfants de notre monde. Maintenant, on peut [____37.____] trois complexes [____38.____] où on peut [____39.____] pendant toute la [____40.____]. Ces trois endroits se trouvent à Disneyland en [____41.____], Disneyworld en [____42.____] et Tokyo Disney au [____43.____]. Mais, bientôt, il y [____44.____] un nouveau complexe en Europe, situé en France qui [____45.____] en 1992.

Le parc est situé à l'est de Paris. On le trouvera directement à 32 kilomètres du coeur de Paris en prennant [____46.____] A4. Le Site, ***Marne-la-Vallée***, est situé [____47.____] Roissey-Charles de Gaulles et Orly, les [____48.____] aéroports plus fameux de la [____49.____]

La construction du parc [____50.____] au printemps 1989 et l'ouverture au public de la [____51.____] phase [____52.____ projectée pour 1992. Le complexe comprend [____53.____] hôtels, un golf, une site pour faire du [____54.____], un [____55.____] d'activitiés et des

(Continuer s'il vous plaît).

logements residentiels. Et bien sûr, il [56.] aura assez de [57.] pour les milles d'[58.] qu'ils attendent.

L'administration d'Eurodisney pense à employer vers 12000 personnes pour la phase 1. LE FIGARO (un journal français) dit que: "près de 6000 dans le Magic Kingdom, 5200 dans les hôtels et le [59.] dans les secteurs récréatifs et de service" (Ibid, p. 29)

Tout le monde attendera l'ouverture du nouvel Eurodisney, spécialement la France.

Cet article est basé sur un article dans le journal Le Figaro, vendredi, le 10 février, 1989, p. 29, 13828, édition de 5h, ISSN -- 0182 - 58522.

(Continuer s'il vous plaît).

Lisez l'article suivant.

Qu'est-ce que les pluies acides?

Les pluies acides sont causées par des émissions d'anhydride sulfurex (SO_2) et d'oxydes d'azote (NO_x). Une fois rejetées dans l'atmosphère, ces substances peuvent être transportées sur de longues distances par les vents dominants et retomber sous forme de pluie, de neige, de brouillard ou de poussières acides. Lorsque l'environnement ne peut neutraliser les dépôts acides, des dommages s'ensuivent.

En Amérique du Nord, les principales sources d'émission de SO_2 sont les centrales électriques alimentées au charbon et les fonderies de métaux non-ferreux. Les principales émissions de NO_x proviennent automobiles et de la combustion de carburant.

Les faits

Plus de 300 000 lacs sont vulnérables, près de 150 000 ont subi des dommages et environ 14 000 sont déjà acidifiés. De plus, 19 rivières à saumons ne contiennent plus de poissons.

Dans l'est du pays, 84 p. 100 des terres agricoles les plus productives reçoivent annuellement des dépôts acides en quantitié supérieure à la limite acceptable.

Environs 55 p. 100 des forêts de l'est du Canada, d'où sont extraits des produits d'une valeur de 14 millards de dollars, se trouvent dans des régions où les pluies sont acides. Les pluies acides seraient un facteur important du dépérissement des forêts de l'est de l'Amérique du Nord et de l'Europe.

De sérieux dommages aux matériaux, aux bâtiments et aux monuments historiques, que l'on attribue aux pluies acides, ont été relevés dans tout l'est du Canada.

Plus de 80 p. 100 des Canadians vivent dans des régions où les dépôts acides sont élevés. D'après des études canadiennes et américaines, il existe un lien entre les polluants acidogènes et certains troubles respiratoires chez les enfants et les asthmatiques, par exemple. Les dépôts acides peuvent aussi accroître les métaux toxiques, comme l'aluminium, le cuivre et le mercure, dans les sources d'eau potable non traitée.

Voici les récherches par les éxperts. Quel est votre avis des pluies acides? Ecrivez-le sur l'affiche. (60)

Cet article est imprimé avec la seule permission d'Environment Canada au bureau d'Edmonton, Alberta, février, 1989.

MERCI BEAUCOUP POUR VOTRE PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX 4

STUDENT ANSWER SHEETS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Self-assessment number:__________________________

2. Age:__________________________

3. Name of School:____________________________________

4. Grade:________________

5. Please circle the appropriate answer.

   a) Sex: M/F

   b) Grades in which I studied French:

   K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13+

SIDE 1

GENERAL PURPOSE - NCS® - ANSWER SHEET

SEE IMPORTANT MARKING INSTRUCTIONS ON SIDE 2

NAME (Last, First, M.I.)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
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SEX Ⓜ Ⓕ

GRADE OR EDUC ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯

BIRTH DATE					IDENTIFICATION NUMBER										SPECIAL CODES					
MO.	DAY		YR.		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Jan. ○																				
Feb. ○																				
Mar. ○	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪
Apr. ○	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①
May ○	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②
Jun. ○	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③
Jul. ○		④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④
Aug. ○		⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤
Sep. ○		⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥
Oct. ○		⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦
Nov. ○		⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧
Dec. ○		⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨

A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E
1 ①②③④⑤	11 ①②③④⑤	21 ①②③④⑤	31 ①②③④⑤	41 ①②③④⑤
2 ①②③④⑤	12 ①②③④⑤	22 ①②③④⑤	32 ①②③④⑤	42 ①②③④⑤
3 ①②③④⑤	13 ①②③④⑤	23 ①②③④⑤	33 ①②③④⑤	43 ①②③④⑤
4 ①②③④⑤	14 ①②③④⑤	24 ①②③④⑤	34 ①②③④⑤	44 ①②③④⑤
5 ①②③④⑤	15 ①②③④⑤	25 ①②③④⑤	35 ①②③④⑤	45 ①②③④⑤
6 ①②③④⑤	16 ①②③④⑤	26 ①②③④⑤	36 ①②③④⑤	46 ①②③④⑤
7 ①②③④⑤	17 ①②③④⑤	27 ①②③④⑤	37 ①②③④⑤	47 ①②③④⑤
8 ①②③④⑤	18 ①②③④⑤	28 ①②③④⑤	38 ①②③④⑤	48 ①②③④⑤
9 ①②③④⑤	19 ①②③④⑤	29 ①②③④⑤	39 ①②③④⑤	49 ①②③④⑤
10 ①②③④⑤	20 ①②③④⑤	30 ①②③④⑤	40 ①②③④⑤	50 ①②③④⑤

A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E
51 ①②③④⑤	61 ①②③④⑤	71 ①②③④⑤	81 ①②③④⑤	91 ①②③④⑤
52 ①②③④⑤	62 ①②③④⑤	72 ①②③④⑤	82 ①②③④⑤	92 ①②③④⑤
53 ①②③④⑤	63 ①②③④⑤	73 ①②③④⑤	83 ①②③④⑤	93 ①②③④⑤
54 ①②③④⑤	64 ①②③④⑤	74 ①②③④⑤	84 ①②③④⑤	94 ①②③④⑤
55 ①②③④⑤	65 ①②③④⑤	75 ①②③④⑤	85 ①②③④⑤	95 ①②③④⑤
56 ①②③④⑤	66 ①②③④⑤	76 ①②③④⑤	86 ①②③④⑤	96 ①②③④⑤
57 ①②③④⑤	67 ①②③④⑤	77 ①②③④⑤	87 ①②③④⑤	97 ①②③④⑤
58 ①②③④⑤	68 ①②③④⑤	78 ①②③④⑤	88 ①②③④⑤	98 ①②③④⑤
59 ①②③④⑤	69 ①②③④⑤	79 ①②③④⑤	89 ①②③④⑤	99 ①②③④⑤
60 ①②③④⑤	70 ①②③④⑤	80 ①②③④⑤	90 ①②③④⑤	100 ①②③④⑤

Oral Interview Assessment Sheet

Name of Student:____________________________________

Name of School:_____________________________________

Grade:__________ Self-Assessment Number:__________

---

1. Did the student use any gesture(s) or any other nonverbal behaviour throughout the interview in order to communicate?

2. Did the student exhibit any frustrations or difficulities with the questions?

For rater only:

1. Linguistic competence:

2. Sociolinguistic competence:

3. Discourse competence:

4. Strategic competence:

5. Level of Proficiency:______________________________

____

Research purposes: Match/non-match

Reading and Writing: Assessment II

Name:____
Self-Assessment Number:______________________________
School:____
Grade:____________________

Please fill in as many bracketed spaces as you can. Take your time. This is not a timed test. When you can no longer continue, please hand in your answer sheet.

Answer Sheet

1. ____________	13. ____________
2. ____________	14. ____________
3. ____________	15. ____________
4. ____________	16. ____________
5. ____________	17. ____________
6. ____________	18. ____________
7. ____________	19. ____________
8. ____________	20. ____________
9. ____________	21. ____________
10. ____________	22. ____________
11. ____________	23. ____________
12. ____________	24. ____________

25. ______________________
26. ______________________
27. ______________________
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43. ______________________
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46. ______________________
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49. ______________________

50. ________________
51. ________________
52. ________________
53. ________________
54. ________________
55. ________________
56. ________________
57. ________________
58. ________________
59. ________________

60. ____

APPENDIX 5

ANSWERS TO READING/WRITING INSTRUMENT

Reading and Writing: Assessment II

Name:

Self-Assessment Number:

School:

Grade:

Please fill in as many bracketed spaces as you can. Take your time. This is not a timed test. When you can no longer continue, please hand in your answer sheet.

Answer Sheet: *Most possible answers*

1. Any female name
2. père
3. l'adresse/Jacques LeBlanc
4. rue, avenue, place, blvd.
5. Québec, (ville)
6. ville (Québec)
7. code
8. téléphone
9. name of month
10. ans
11. famille/maison
12. enfants
13. garçon/fils
14. any school subject
15. any sport
16. brand name or country adj.
17. any colour
18. nouvelle, neuve
19. ai
20. any amount over $250.00
21. kilomètres/milles
22. excellente/parfaite
23. information/renseignements
24. offre/demande

25. mardi a vendredi
26. heures
27. le
28. entre (avant) a, apres
29. matin
30. heure
31. suis
32. avec/sur/pour
33. mère/soeur/famille
34. beaucoup
35. homme/monsieur
36. beaucoup/trop
37. visiter
38. touristiques
39. s'amuser/rester
40. journée/semaine
41. Californie
42. Floride
43. Japon
44. aura
45. ouvera (va ouvrir) /sera completée
46. l'autoroute, la route
47. entre, près de
48. deux
49. France
50. a commencé/commence(ra)
51. première
52. est/sera
53. des, or any plural number
54. sport/tennis/camping
55. centre
56. y
57. parking/stationnment/ place
58. autos/autobus/enfants
59. reste/800 cents
60. Réponse libre

APPENDIX SIX

INSTRUMENT PROFICIENCY RANGES

Ranges for Test Instruments

Self-assessment test instrument:

Out of a possible raw score of 75:

Aural Comprehension

Novice: 0 - 44

Novice-Low = 32 and lower

Novice-Mid = 33 - 39

Novice-High = 40 - 44

Intermediate: 45 - 64

Intermediate-Low = 45 - 51

Intermediate-Mid = 52 - 57

Intermediate-High = 58 - 64

Advanced: 65 - 68

Advanced +: 69 - 72

Superior: 73 - 75

Oral Production

Novice: 0 - 45

Novice-Low = 33 and lower
Novice-Mid = 34 - 39
Novice-High = 40 - 45

Intermediate: 46 - 64

Intermediate-Low = 46- 51
Intermediate-Mid = 52 - 57
Intermediate-High = 58 - 64

Advanced: 65 - 68

Advanced +: 69 - 72

Superior: 73 - 75

Reading Comprehension

Novice: 0 - 40

Novice-Low = 25 and lower
Novice-Mid = 26 - 30
Novice-High = 31 - 40

Intermediate: 41 - 65

Intermediate-Low = 41 - 47
Intermediate-Mid = 48 - 55
Intermediate-High = 56 - 65

Advanced: 66 - 69

Advanced +: 70 - 72

Superior: 73 - 75

Writing

Novice: 0 - 40

Novice-Low = 15 and lower
Novice-Mid = 16 - 29
Novice-High = 30 - 40

Intermediate: 41 - 60

Intermediate-Low = 41 - 45
Intermediate-Mid = 46 - 52
Intermediate-High = 53 - 60

Advanced: 61 - 67

Advanced +: 68 - 72

Superior: 73 - 75

Marking Scale for Reading/Writing Assessment

Rating for readings:
Article 1 = Novice-High
Article 2 = Intermediate-High
Article 3 = Advanced+
Article 4 = Superior

Ranges for Reading Scores

Reading Scores: Total of possible 118 marks

Novice-Low = 0 -15
Novice-Mid = 16 - 25
Novice-High = 26 - 30
Intermediate-Low = 31 - 41
Intermediate-Mid = 42 - 52
Intermediate-High = 53 - 68
Advanced = 69 - 93
Advanced+ = 94 - 109
Superior = 110 - 118

Writing scores (linguistic intuition and accuracy) out of a possible score of 177:

Novice-Low = 0 - 20
Novice-Mid = 21 - 40
Novice-High = 41 - 60
Intermediate-Low = 61 - 80
Intermediate-Mid = 81 - 100
Intermediate-High = 101 - 130 + writing assignment
Advanced, Advanced+, Superior = 131 - 177 + accurate writing assignment

APPENDIX SEVEN

TABLES AND FIGURES

NOTE TO READER

When reading the figures please note the following:

1. Numbers falling below 0 denote that the student has underestimated his/her proficiency level.

2. Numbers above 0 denote that the student has overestimated his/her proficiency level.

Table One

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY GRADE AND GENDER

GRADE	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	%
4	19	7.0	18	6.6	37	13.6
5	22	8.1	22	8.1	44	16.2
6	19	7.0	20	7.4	39	14.3
7	22	8.1	21	7.7	43	15.8
8	12	4.4	20	7.4	32	11.8
9	8	2.9	16	5.8	24	8.8
10	12	4.4	17	6.2	29	10.7
11	4	1.5	13	4.8	17	6.3
12	3	1.1	4	1.5	7	2.5
TOTAL	121	44.5	151	55.5	272	100.0

Table Two

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

AVERAGE	AGE	GRADE	YRS. OF STUDY IN FRENCH
MALE	12.19	6.79	4.02
FEMALE	12.58	7.41	4.52
AVG.	12.41	7.10	4.27

FIGURE ONE

AURAL COMPREHENSION DIFFERENCES BY GRADE

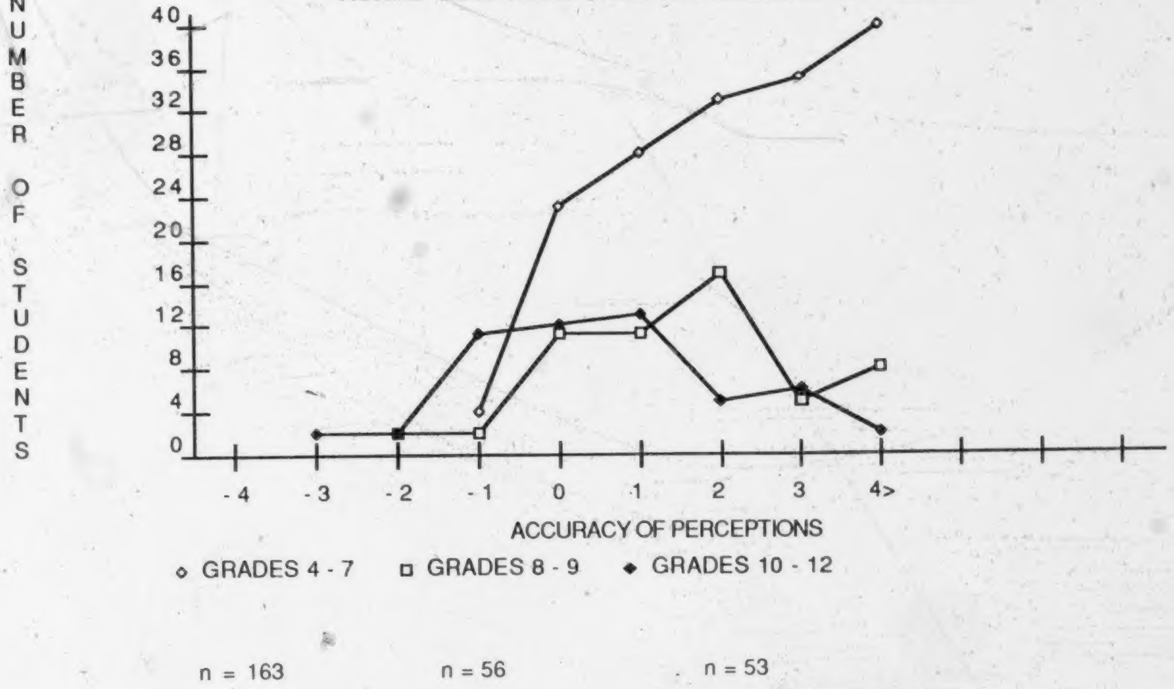


Table Three

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Aural Comprehension by Grade

Grades	Mean	S.D.	N
4 - 7	2.2945	1.6440	163
8 - 9	1.6250	1.7222	56
10 - 12	0.5472	1.6935	53

FIGURE TWO

ORAL PRODUCTION DIFFERENCES BY GRADE

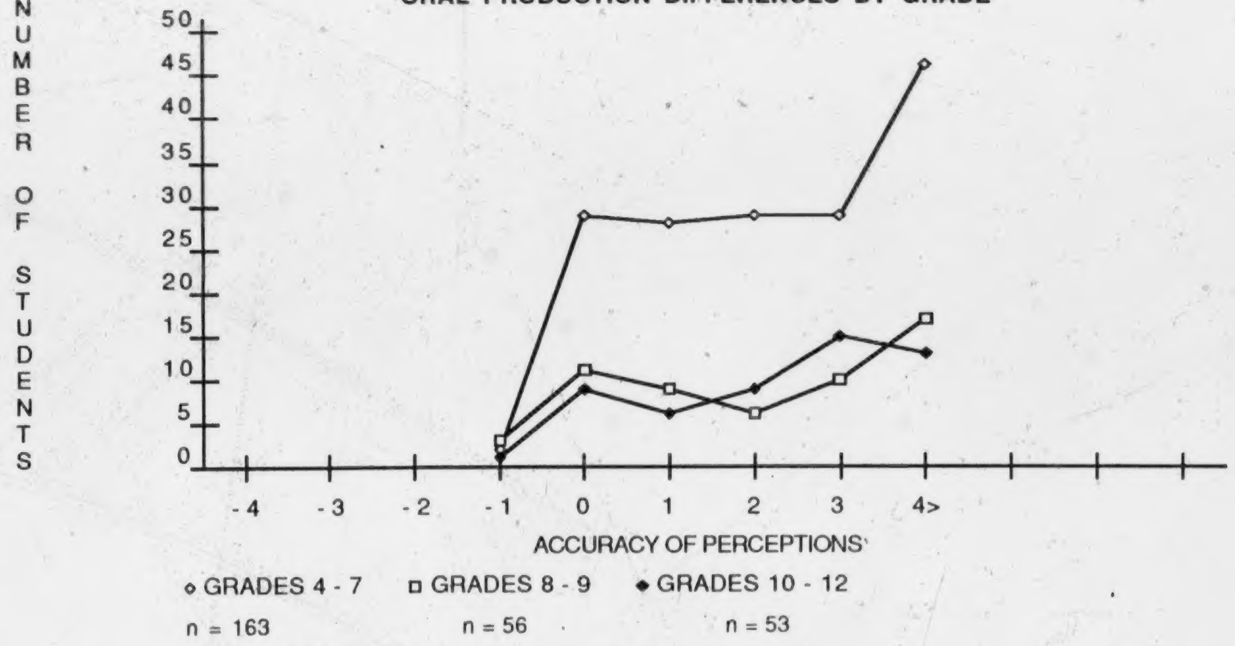


Table Four

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Oral Production by Grade

Grades	Mean	S.D.	N
4 - 7	2.3252	1.8118	163
8 - 9	2.1607	1.8169	56
10 - 12	2.3585	1.6302	53

FIGURE THREE

READING DIFFERENCES BY GRADE

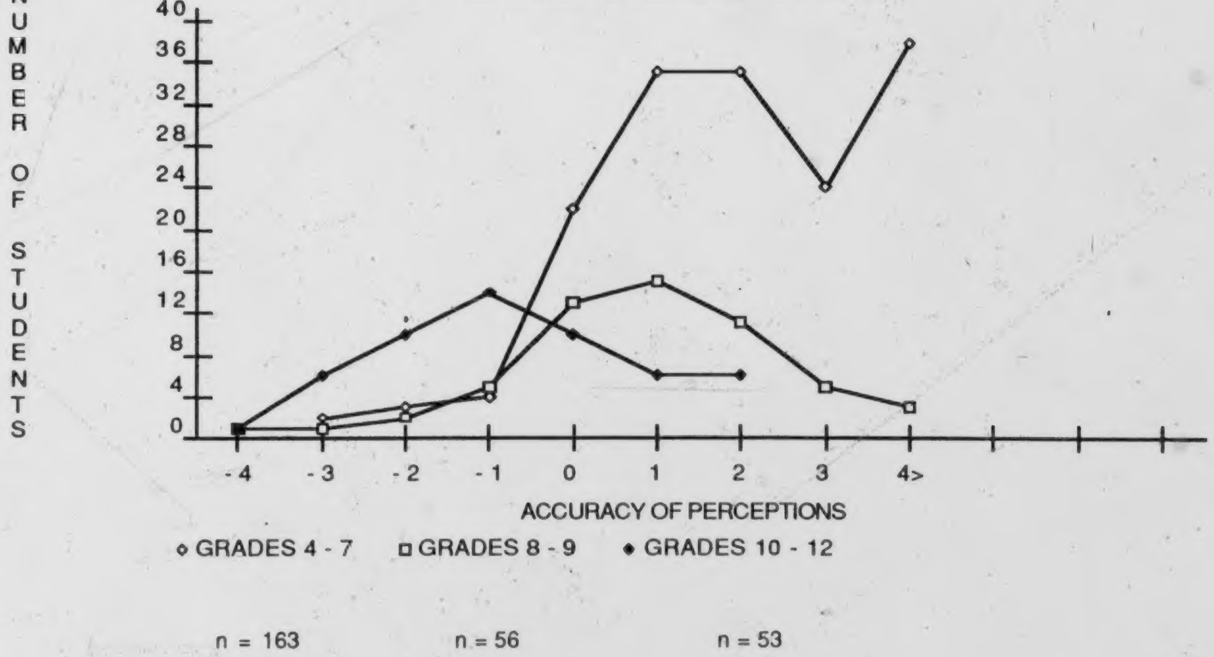


Table Five

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Reading by Grade

Grades	Mean	S.D.	N
4 - 7	2.0245	1.8458	163
8 - 9	0.8929	1.7234	56
10 - 12	-.7170	1.5613	53

FIGURE FOUR

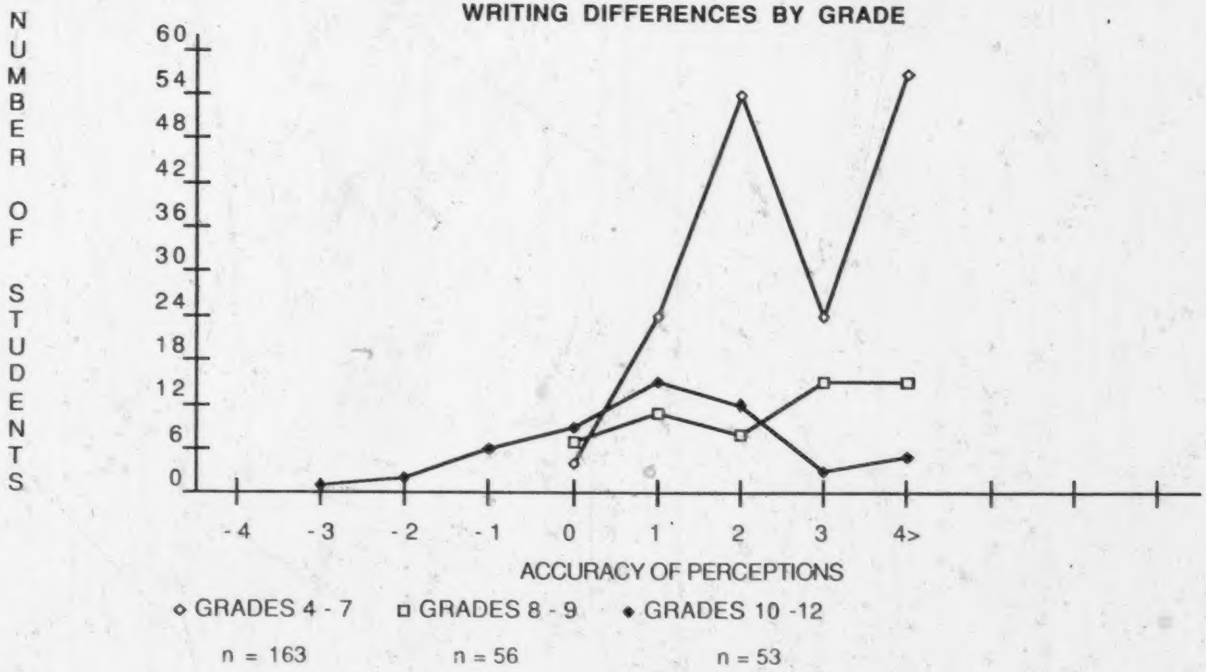

WRITING DIFFERENCES BY GRADE
NUMBER OF STUDENTS
60
54
48
42
36
30
24
18
12
6
0
-4
-3
-2
-1
0
1
2
3
4>
ACCURACY OF PERCEPTIONS
◇ GRADES 4 - 7
□ GRADES 8 - 9
◆ GRADES 10 -12
n = 163
n = 56
n = 53

Table Six

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Writing by Grade

Grades	Mean	S.D.	N
4 - 7	2.8466	1.4973	163
8 - 9	2.5000	1.6181	56
10 - 12	1.0566	1.6573	53

FIGURE FIVE

AURAL COMPREHENSION DIFFERENCES BY AGE

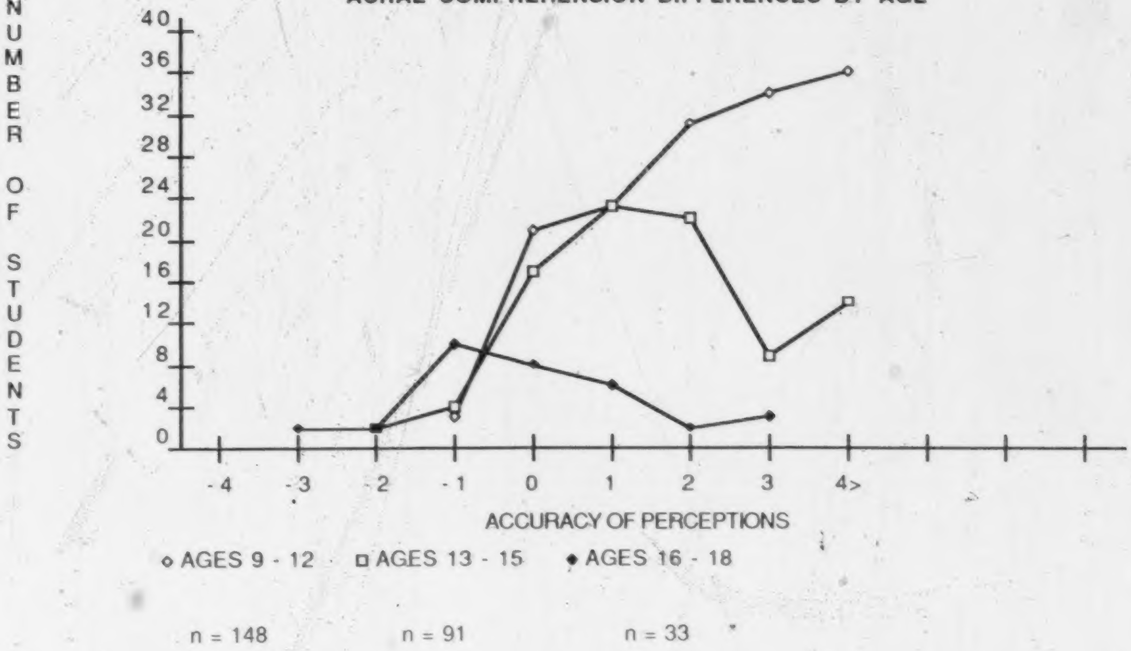


Table Seven

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Aural Comprehension by Age

Age	Mean	S.D.	N
9 - 12	2.3446	1.6401	148
13 - 15	1.6264	1.6509	91
16 - 18	-.0303	1.5509	33

FIGURE SIX

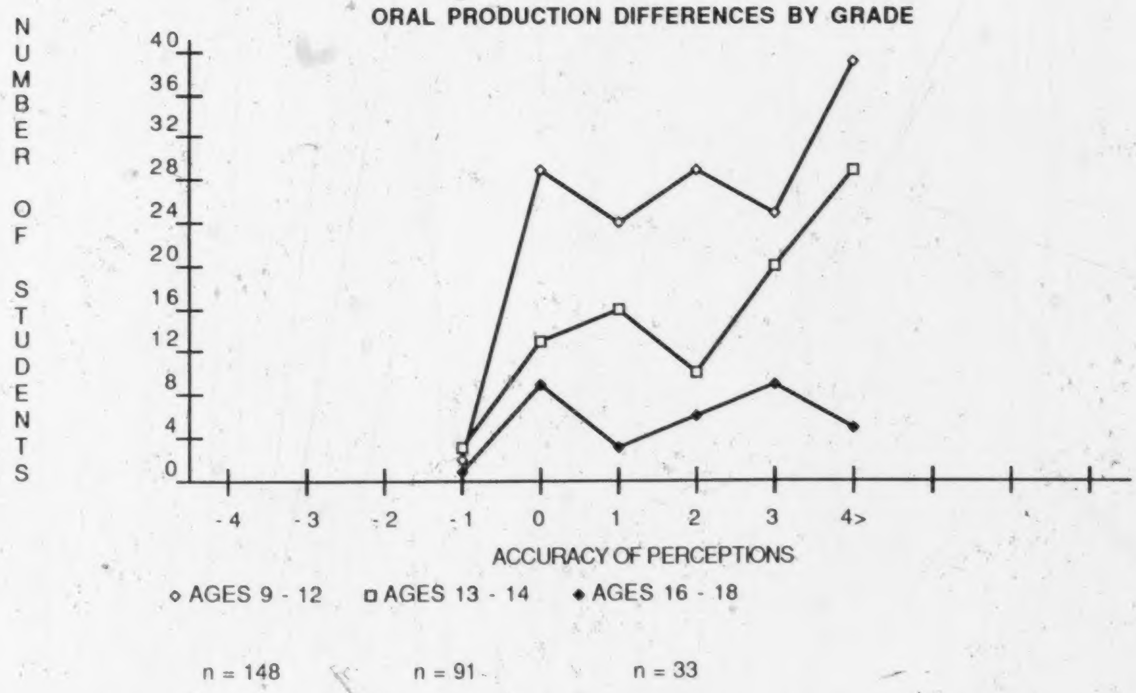

ORAL PRODUCTION DIFFERENCES BY GRADE
NUMBER OF STUDENTS
40
36
32
28
24
20
16
12
8
4
0
-4
-3
-2
-1
0
1
2
3
4>
ACCURACY OF PERCEPTIONS
◇ AGES 9 - 12
□ AGES 13 - 14
◆ AGES 16 - 18
n = 148
n = 91
n = 33

Table Eight

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Oral Production by Age

Age	Mean	S.D.	N
9 - 12	2.2905	1.8341	148
13 - 15	2.4725	1.7406	91
16 - 18	1.8485	1.5436	33

FIGURE SEVEN

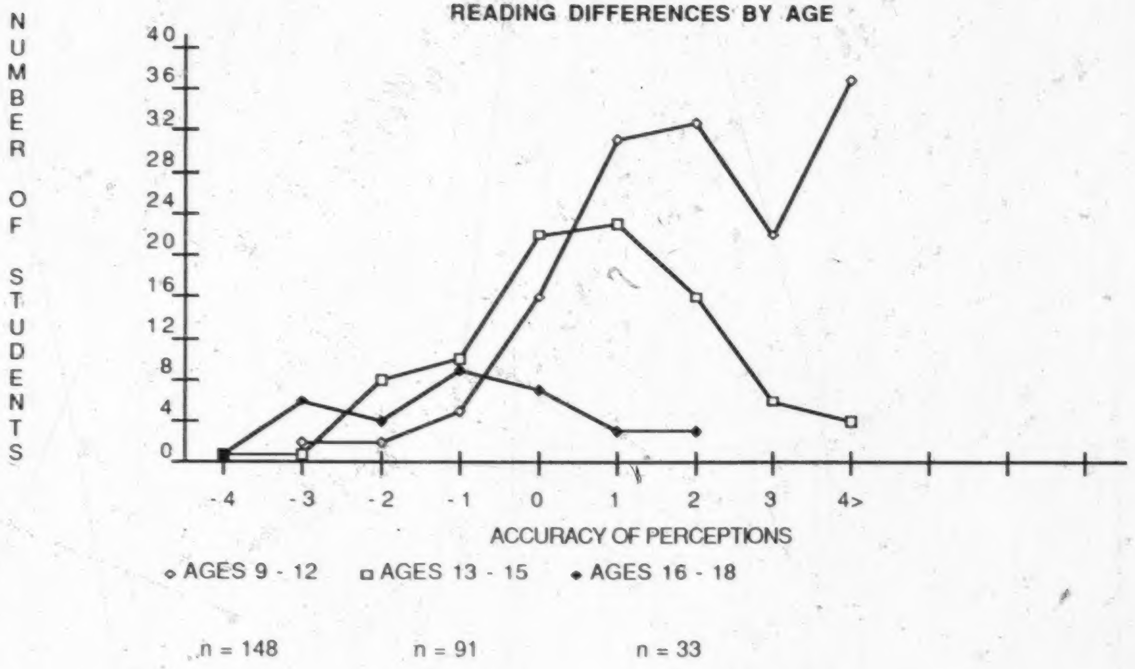


Table Nine

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Reading by Age

Age	Mean	S.D.	N
9 - 12	2.1284	1.8231	148
13 - 15	0.6593	1.7335	91
16 - 18	-1.0000	1.5811	33

FIGURE EIGHT

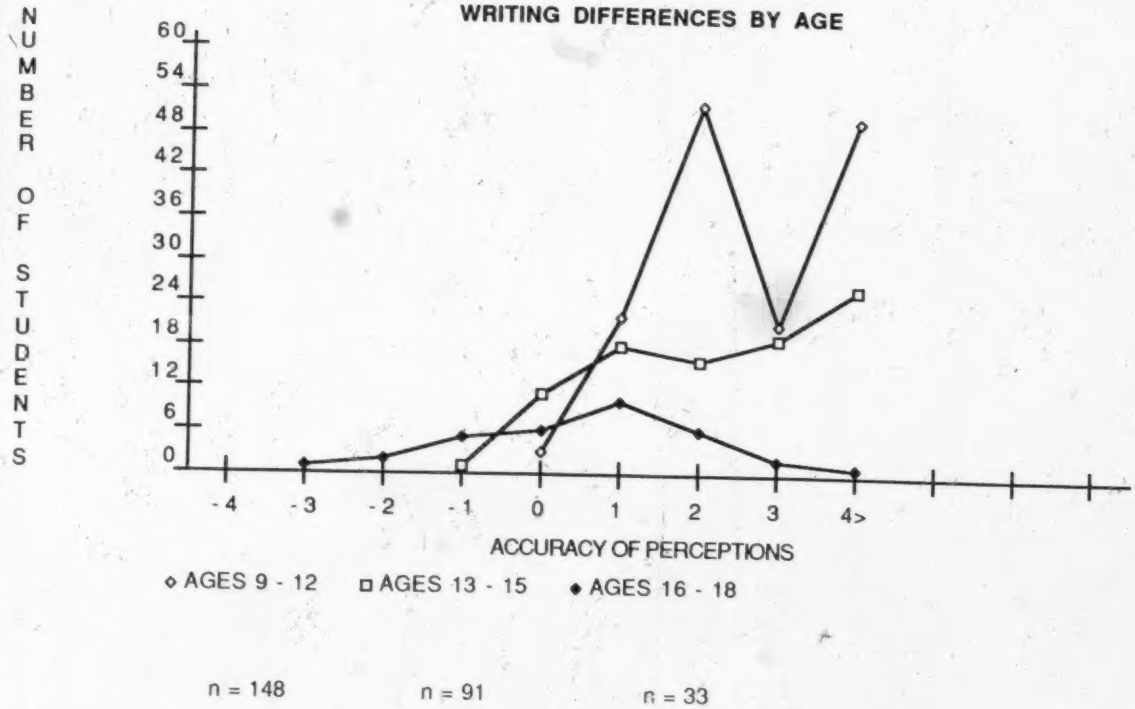


Table Ten

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Writing by Age

Age	Mean	S.D.	N
9 - 12	2.8446	1.5151	148
13 - 15	2.4066	1.5915	91
16 - 18	0.6061	1.5600	33

FIGURE NINE

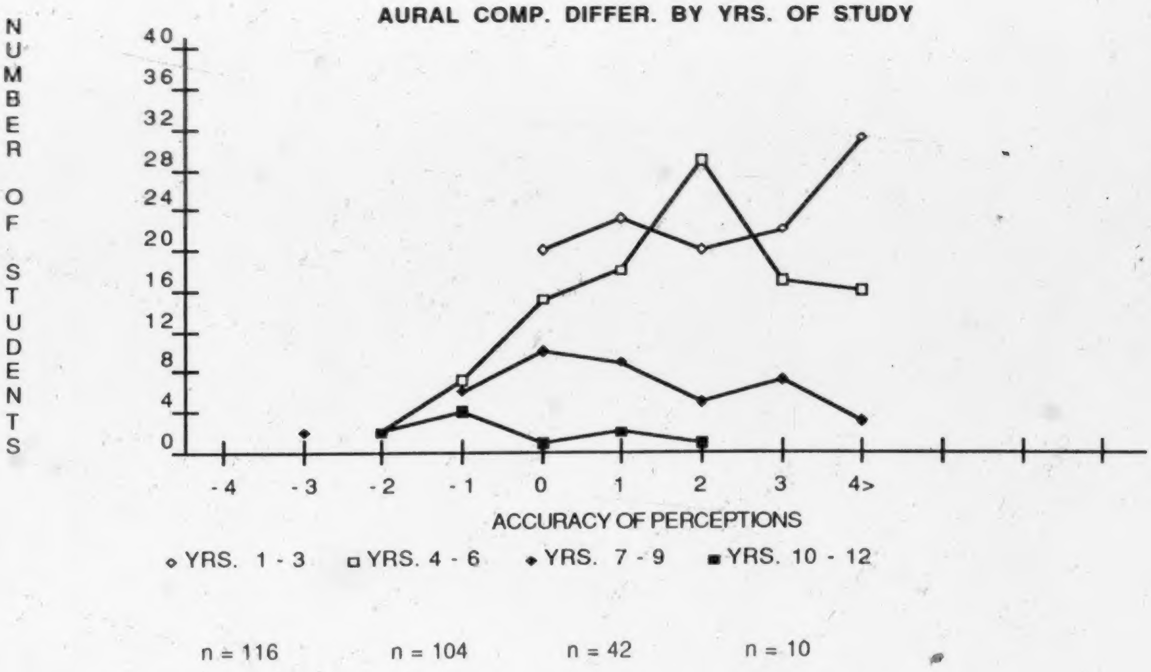

AURAL COMP. DIFFER. BY YRS. OF STUDY
NUMBER OF STUDENTS
40
36
32
28
24
20
16
12
8
4
0
-4
-3
-2
-1
0
1
2
3
4>
ACCURACY OF PERCEPTIONS
◇ YRS. 1 - 3
□ YRS. 4 - 6
◆ YRS. 7 - 9
■ YRS. 10 - 12
n = 116
n = 104
n = 42
n = 10

Table Eleven

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Aural Comprehension by

Years of Study in French

Years of Study	Mean	S.D.	N
1 - 3	2.3017	1.6483	116
4 - 6	1.8269	1.7261	104
7 - 9	0.9762	1.8009	42
10 - 12	-.4000	1.3499	10

FIGURE TEN

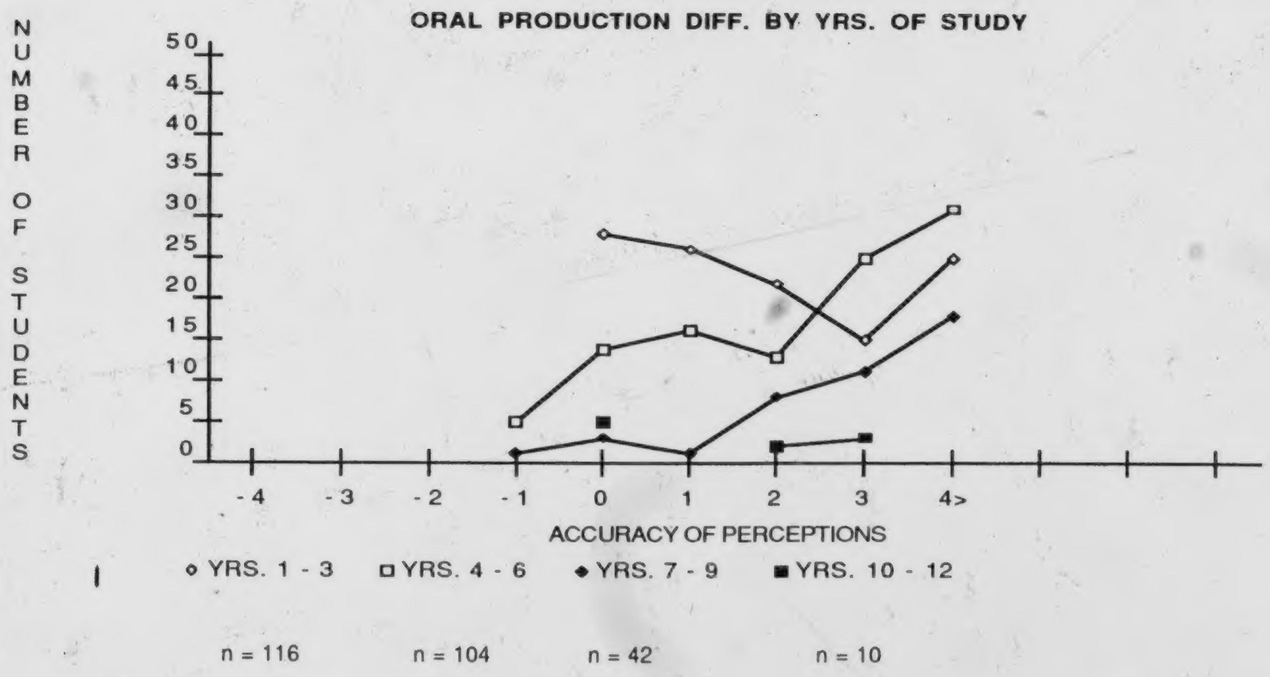

ORAL PRODUCTION DIFF. BY YRS. OF STUDY

Table Twelve

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Oral Production by Years of Study in French

Years of Study	Mean	S.D.	N
1 - 3	2.0172	1.7888	116
4 - 6	2.4231	1.8099	104
7 - 9	3.0000	1.4650	42
10 - 12	1.3000	1.4181	10

FIGURE ELEVEN

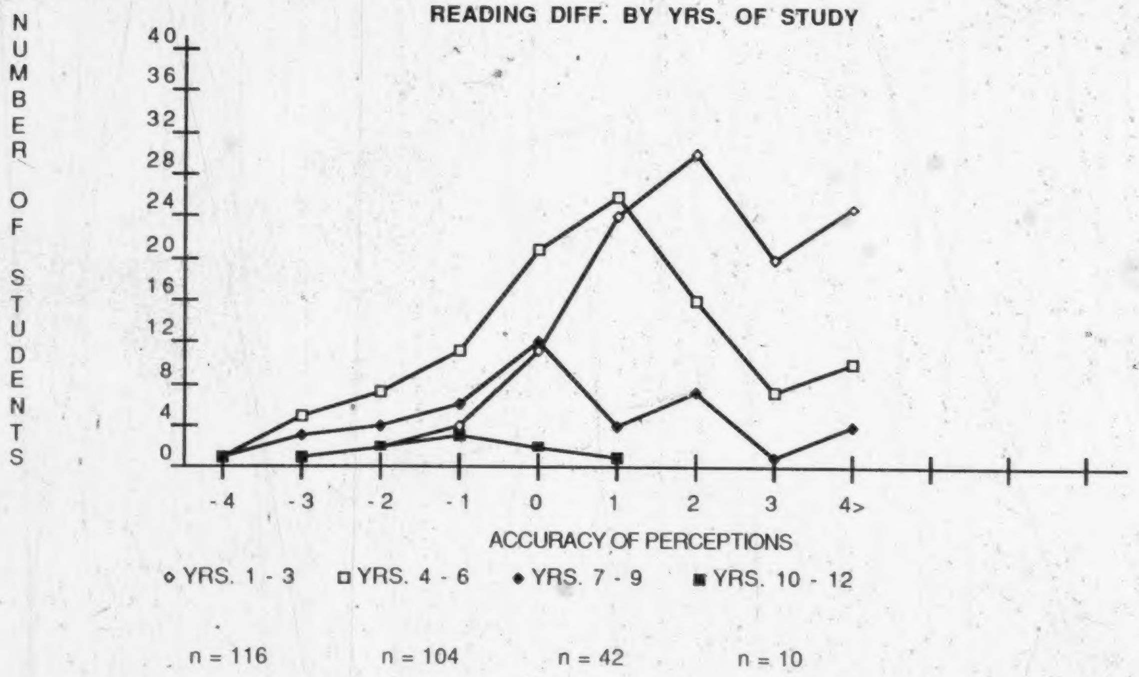


Table Thirteen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Reading by Years of Study in French

Years of Study	Mean	S.D.	N
1 - 3	2.1897	1.7190	116
4 - 6	0.7596	1.9233	104
7 - 9	0.3095	2.1807	42
10 - 12	-.4000	2.2211	10

FIGURE TWELVE

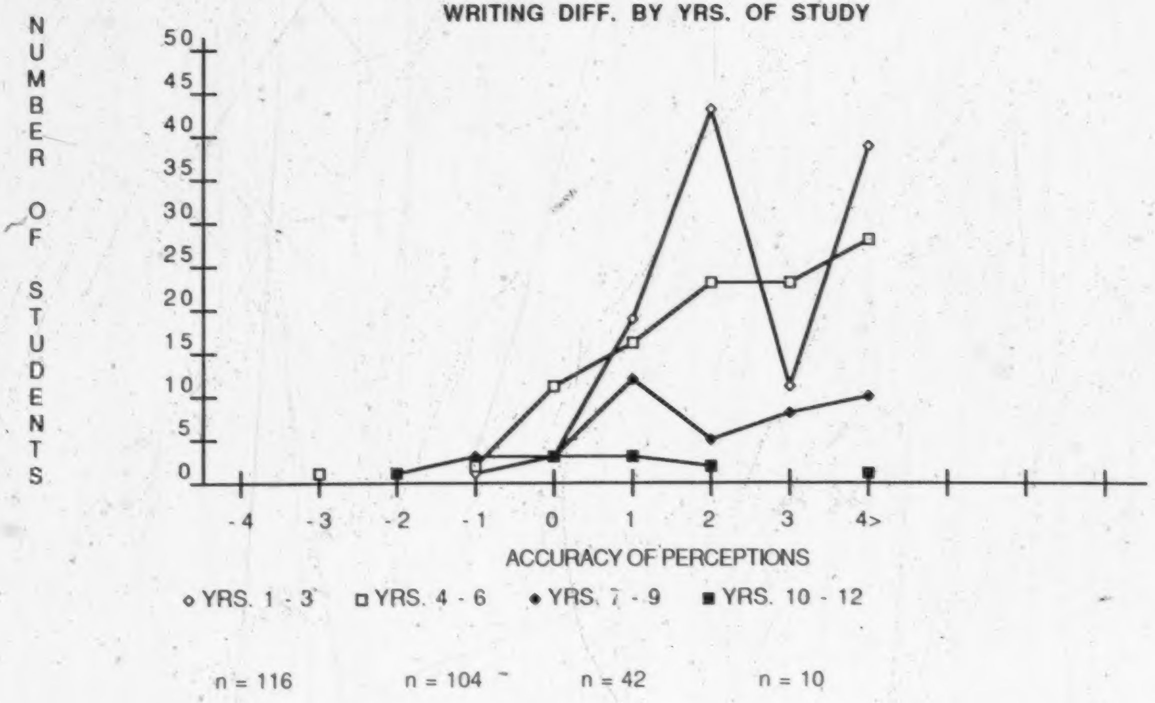
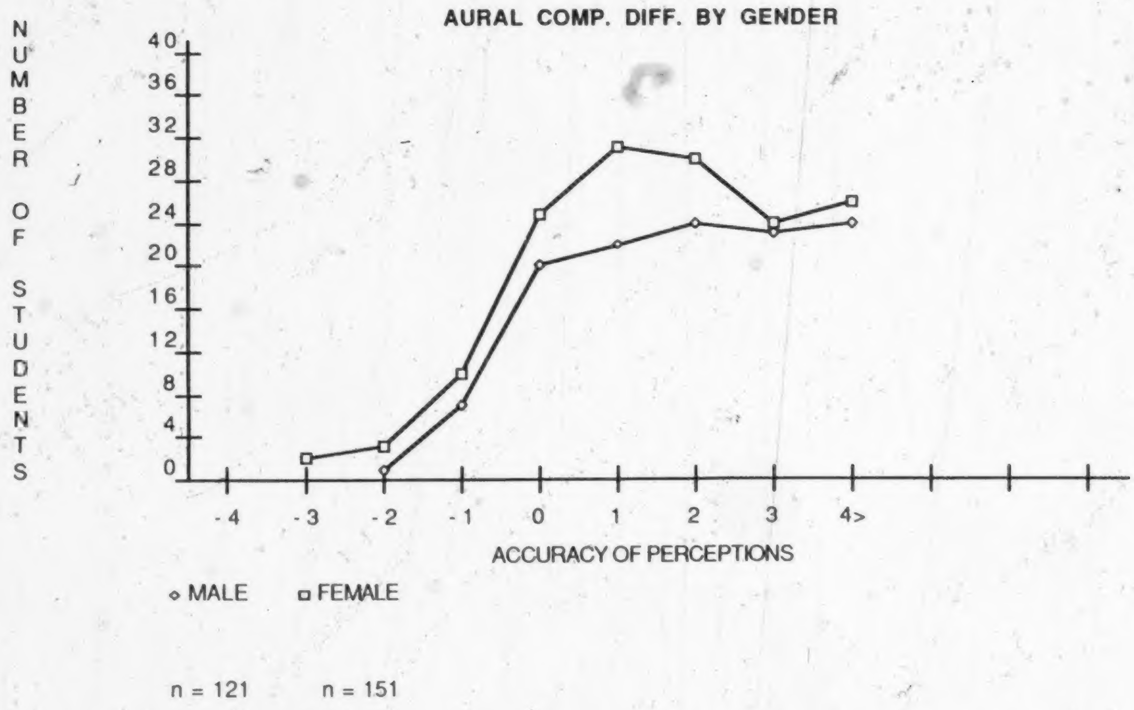


Table Fourteen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Writing by Years of Study in French

Years of Study	Mean	S.D.	N
1 - 3	2.6810	1.5357	116
4 - 6	2.4327	1.7110	104
7 - 9	2.0714	1.8921	42
10 - 12	0.9000	1.5951	10

FIGURE THIRTEEN



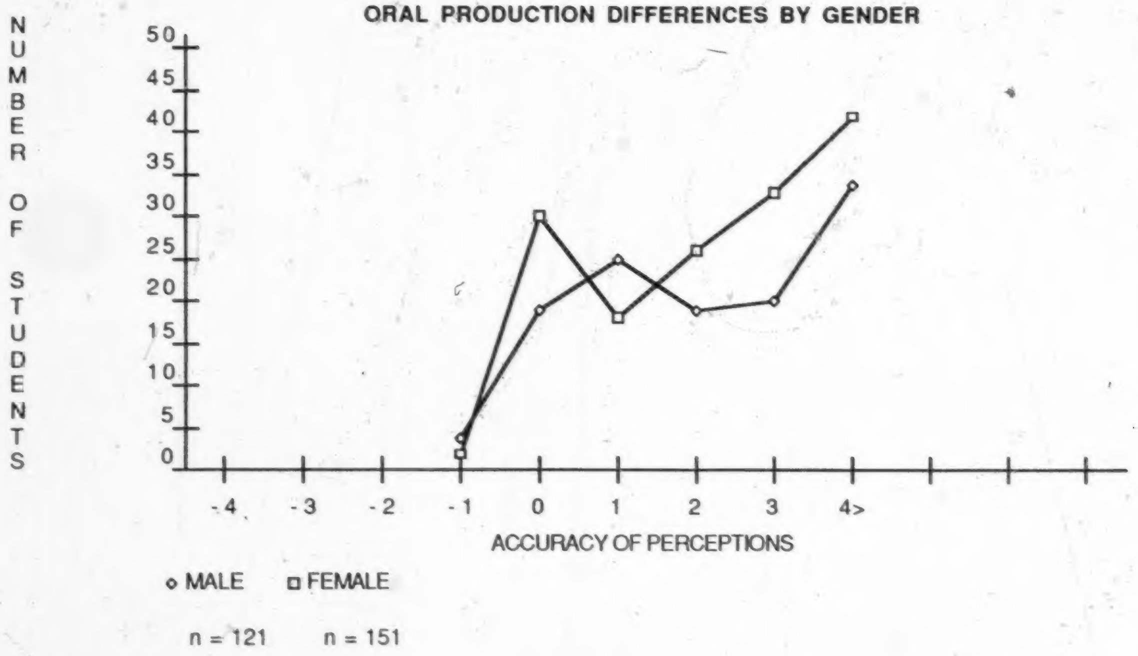
AURAL COMP. DIFF. BY GENDER

Table Fifteen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Aural Comprehension by Gender

Gender	Mean	S.D.	N
Male	1.9256	1.7967	121
Female	1.7285	1.8688	151

FIGURE FOURTEEN



ORAL PRODUCTION DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

Table Sixteen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Oral Production by Gender

Gender	Mean	S.D.	N
Male	2.2231	1.8234	121
Female	2.3576	1.7372	151

FIGURE FIFTEEN

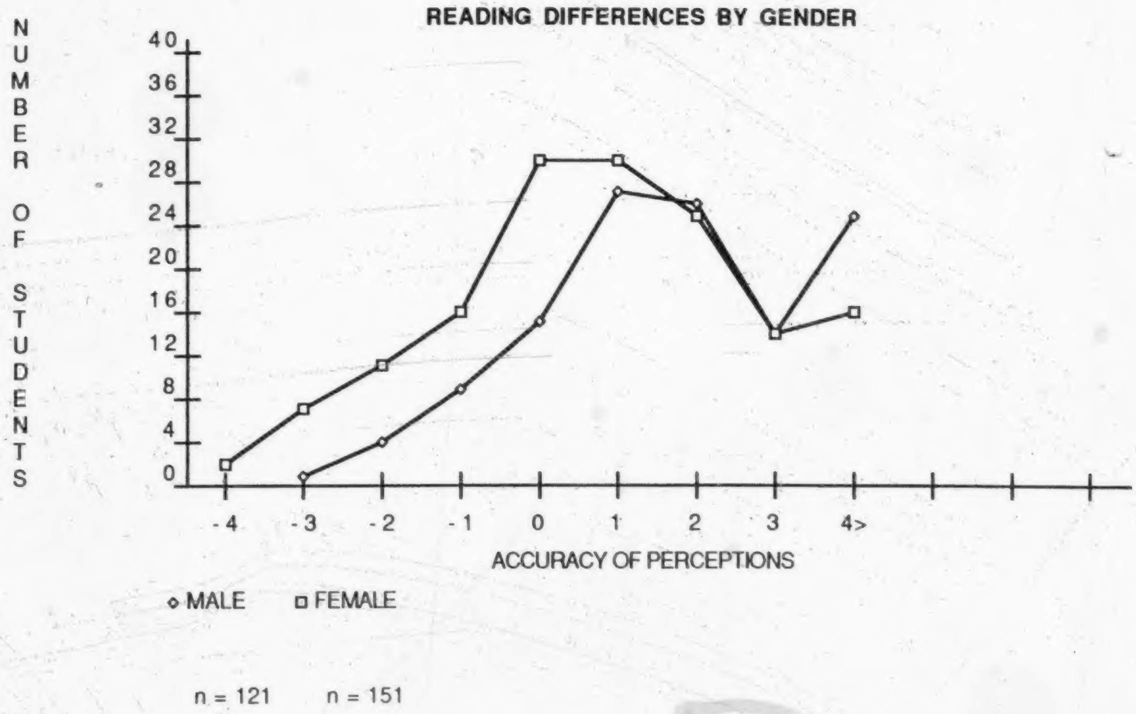


Table Seventeen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Reading by Gender

Gender	Mean	S.D.	N
Male	1.7934	1.9787	121
Female	0.8278	2.0323	151

FIGURE SIXTEEN

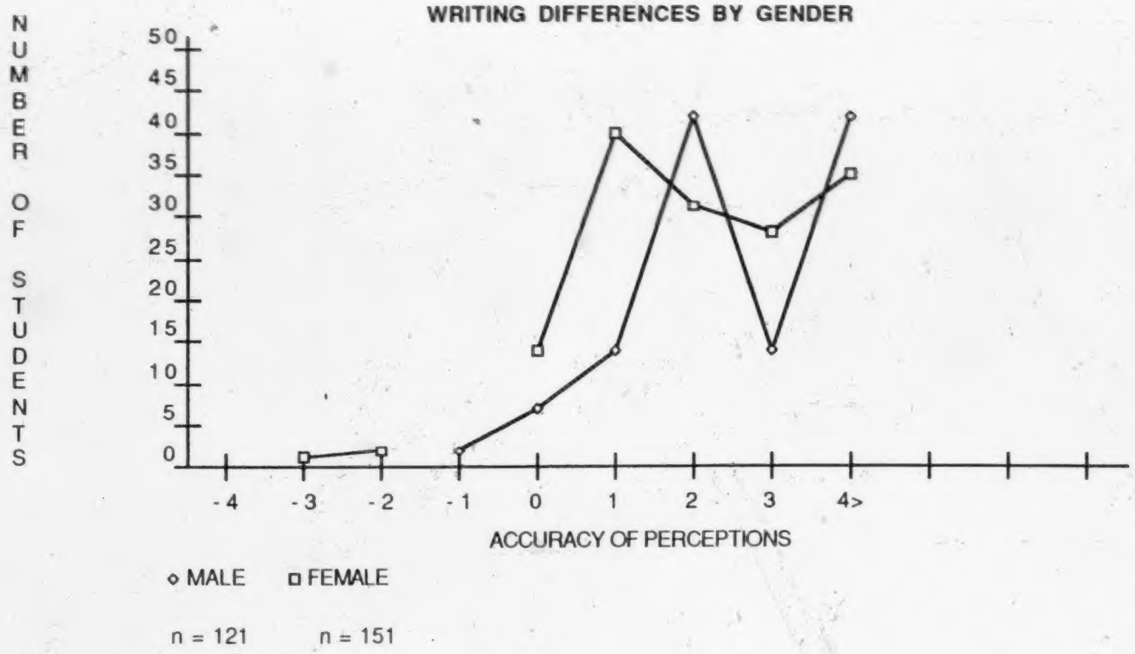


Table Eighteen

Analysis of Variance of Differences in Writing by

Gender

Gender	Mean	S.D.	N
Male	2.7603	1.6784	121
Female	2.1589	1.6657	151

Table Nineteen

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF THE PURPOSE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

REASON	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
To see how much students know	5.51	6.62	7.35	6.62	5.15	2.57	1.47	0.74	2.21	0.74	0.37	39.34
To see if learning	2.21	3.31	1.47	1.84			3.31	0.37	0.74	0.37		13.60
For research purposes	0.74	1.47	1.84	3.68	2.57	2.94	1.47	1.47	1.10	1.10	0.37	18.73
To see what required for next level	0.74	0.74										1.47
It was a test	1.47	0.37				0.74						2.57
No answer	1.84	1.47	1.84	1.10	3.68	2.57	1.84		1.10	0.37	0.37	16.18
To see if French too hard for students	0.37	0.37		0.37								1.10
For me to know what I know		1.47	1.84	1.84	0.37							5.51
To see if people like learning French				0.37								0.37
To see how good my French teacher is	0.37											0.37
To get good grades	0.37											0.37
To see if I was good at French		0.37										0.37
To see how well French program working					1.47	1.84						3.31

continued

Table Nineteen

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF THE PURPOSE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

REASON	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
To know what questions going to ask					0.37							0.37
No idea					1.10					0.37		1.47
To tell how I feel about French		0.37										0.37
It was part of my French class		0.37					0.37					0.74
To see what level at as we know it							0.74		0.74			1.10
TOTAL	13.6	16.2	14.3	15.8	11.8	8.8	8.0	2.6	5.2	2.6.	1.1	100

Table Twenty

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF WHAT INFORMATION THE QUESTIONNAIRE GAVE THE STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ABILITIES

REASON	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
Told me what skills good at (what can/not do)	8.46	10.29	9.93	11.40	7.72	8.09	5.15	1.47	2.21	0.74	0.37	65.81
Not much	2.57	2.94	0.37	1.84	2.21	0.37	1.10	0.74	1.47	0.37	0.37	14.34
Like a report card	0.37		0.37									0.74
Told me not very good at French	0.37	0.37	1.84	0.74			0.37		0.37	0.37	0.37	4.78
Told me I had to be more advanced		0.37		0.37								0.74
No answer	1.47	0.74	1.47	0.74	0.37		0.37					5.15
Told me what I had to work on		0.74	0.74									1.47
Told me you could get a job with two languages				0.37								0.37
Told me things I didn't know		0.74										0.74
Did not tell me anything	0.37											0.37
Told me that I was average					0.37							0.37
Told me I don't know anything					0.37	0.37						0.74
Told me I need to do some work					0.74							0.74
Showed me I don't know as much as I thought I did									0.37			0.37

continued

Table Twenty

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF WHAT INFORMATION THE QUESTIONNAIRE GAVE THE STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ABILITIES

REASON	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
Gave me idea of sorts of situations I might be in and how I would react										0.74		0.74
Told me what areas stressed in Fr. and what we don't know well							0.37		0.37			0.74
Told me I had a lot of trouble speaking Fr.							0.74		0.37			1.10
Told me my Fr. has gone down since I left immersion								0.37				0.37
Didn't tell me anything that I hadn't been told in Fr. class										0.37		0.37
TOTAL	13.60	16.18	14.34	15.81	11.76	8.82	8.09	2.57	5.15	2.57	1.10	100.00

Table Twenty - One

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF WHAT INFORMATION THE QUESTIONNAIRE DID NOT GIVE THE STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ABILITIES

REASON	**GRADE**											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
No answer	6.62	10.66	4.78	3.68	2.57	0.37	1.84	0.37	0.74	0.37		31.99
How well questions answered/results/what level at	0.74	0.74	1.47	2.94	0.74	0.74	2.57		0.37		0.37	10.66
Found questionnaire difficult	0.37	0.37			0.37							1.10
About things I already knew	1.84	0.37	0.74	0.37								3.31
Questionnaire did not relate immediately where weaker or stronger			0.74	1.47			0.37			0.37		2.94
Seemed to be fine/nothing really wrong	2.94	4.04	6.25	3.68	5.51	2.21	2.21	1.84	2.94	1.47	0.37	33.46
That I need to study two languages				0.37								0.37
What we're suppose to be doing in Fr.	0.37			0.37								0.74
How I could do better/improve my skills				0.37	0.74		0.37		0.74	0.37		2.57
That it was going on the report card				0.74								0.74
Why suppose to be doing this				0.37		0.37						0.74

continued

Table Twenty - One

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN PERCENTAGES OF WHAT INFORMATION THE QUESTIONNAIRE DID NOT GIVE THE STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ABILITIES

REASON	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	TOTAL
Didn't tell me if I knew Fr.			0.37	0.37								0.74
If the school was going to turn Fr.				0.37								0.37
Did not tell you how you were going to communicate						0.74						0.74
Did not go over the questions to show answers						0.37						0.37
Did not tell me if I evaluated myself correctly						0.37						0.37
Whether good or bad in Fr.					0.74							0.74
Did not tell you your progress					0.37							0.37
Did not tell me if I could apply me knowledge						0.74						0.74
Did not tell me if I would survive in Québec or Paris						0.37					0.37	0.74
Did not tell you how you stood against others						0.37	0.37		0.37			1.10
Did not tell me what unkown to me					0.37	0.37						0.74
Student did not answer question properly	0.74			0.74	0.37	1.84	0.37	0.37				4.41
TOTAL	13.60	16.18	14.34	15.81	11.76	8.82	8.09	2.57	5.15	2,57	1.10	100.00

Table Twenty - Two

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AS TO WHEN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED

WHEN DURING YEAR	**GRADE**											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	%
At the beginning of yr.	3	10	2	4	6	2	2		1	3	1	12.5
At the end of yr.	19	24	6	9	12	5	12	2	4	1	1	34.9
At both begin. and end	12	8	21	23	13	16	6	5	7	3	1	42.3
In middle of yr.	2	1	6	3					2			5.1
In middle and end of yr.	1	1	2	1								1.8
Begin., middle and end				1		1						0.8
Throughout the year					1		1					0.8
No answer			2	2			1					1.8
TOTAL	37	44	39	43	32	24	22	7	14	7	3	100.0

Table Twenty - Three

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AS TO THEIR FEELINGS EVOKED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

WHAT FEELING EVOKED	GRADE											
	4	5	6	7	8	9	FR10	FR10N	FR20	FR30	FR30N	%
Good	25	25	15	20	10	4	12	1	7	2	1	44.8
Bad	6	5	8	7	11	5	5	2	1	2	0	19.1
Both good and bad	6	13	11	11	7	5	1	2	5	2		23.2
Neither feeling		1	3	3	2	7	2	2	1		2	8.5
No answer			2	2	2	3	2			1		4.4
Total no. of students	37	44	39	43	32	24	22	7	14	7	3	100.0

Table Twenty - Four

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS GROUPED BY GRADE AS TO THEIR FEELINGS EVOKED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

WHAT FEELING EVOKED	**GRADES GROUPED AS PER DISTRICT'S ORGANISATION**		
	4 - 7	**8 - 9**	**10 - 12**
Good	52.1	25.0	43.3
Bad	16.0	28.6	18.9
Both good and bad	25.2	21.4	18.9
Neither feeling	4.2	16.0	13.2
No answer	2.5	9.0	5.7
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0

APPENDIX 8

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW COMMENTS

Additional Comments Made by Students

Question Number 1

None

Question Number 2

Number of comments: 23

- "Told me I had learned a lot since the beginning of the year." (Grade 4, female)

- "Told me that I knew very little." (Grade 6, female)

- "I could recognize words but not full sentences." (Grade 6, male)

- "Told me I could understand people in French." (Grade 7, female)

- "Told me I had to learn more complete sentences and more of the words." (Grade 7, female)

- "It gave me questions to answer that I had never though of before... like 'How well do you think you can read in French?' I never really thought about that before.... It helped me understand...the things I should be trying to learn." (Grade 7, male)

- "It told me that if I was to meet a French person on the street I could probably find a way to communicate with them." (Grade 7, female)

- "Told me I know vocabulary and the weather. I did better than I thought I would." (Grade 7, female)

- "It told me my reading/writing skills are better than my oral." (Grade 7, male)

- "Told me I could learn and excel if I put my mind to it." (Grade 8, male)

- "Out of 10, I would give myself a 5 or 6 on understanding and speaking." (Grade 8, female)

- "I already know where I stand." (Grade 8, male)

- "It told me I could not do much." (Grade 8, female)

- "I thought I knew more than I did before I took the questionnaire. It taught me that I did know how to put words into sentence." (Grade 8, female)

- "It told me about reading and writing. I found that I could read it and understand it better." (Grade 9, female)

- "Yes, it really told me a lot. It told me if I could give directions, if I could count to ten..." (Grade 9, female)

- "Yeah, I wanted to study harder in French and at it more so I can get better at it. Just study more and work harder." (Grade 9, male)

- "Like with radios when there was the question about Brian Mulroney and he was talking about Acid Rain, or something, I kind a said 'No, I don't think I would understand.'" (French 10, female)

- "The questionnaire made you think about what it would be like to be in a situation like this." (Paraphrase, French 10, female)

- "There were things that it had on it that I never thought that I would be able to do in French. But when I sat there and I thought about it could actually answer the question." (French 20, female)

- "...It's easier to think that you can do it on a test, er on the questionnaire than was in true." *Interviewer, " You mean in reality?"* "Yes." *"So do you think the questionnaire gave you a false sense of security?"* "Hm, a bit I think." *"Do you think you oover rated yourself?"* "Probably." (French 20, male)

- "It told me that after 8 years of French I should be a lot more advanced than I am." (French 20, female)

- "It led me to look at myself and see how well I would survive in Quebec." (French 20, female)

Question 3

Number of comments: 6

- "Not appropriate for what we are doing at this time." *"How would you change it?"* " You need to find out what the majority of the people do know and continue with that kind of questionnaire situation." (Grade 7, male)

- "Not that much, I already know where I am at." (Grade 9, female)

- "Did not tell me how to solve the problem." (French 10, female)

- "I know I'm not so great, but it did not tell me what level I'm at." (French 10, female)

- "Some of the questions were kind of easy, but others were really hard and you really had to think." (French 10N, female)

- "The questionnaire did give an idea of what we have learnt in class and how it can be applied to other contexts." (Paraphrase, French 30, female)

Question 4

Number of comments: 37

- "At the beginning to see how much I know and at the end to see if I knew more." (Grade 4)

- "Questionnaire could help to study better." (Grade 4)

- "It would be good to do every year, at the end of the year." (Grade 4)

- "At the end, because at the beginning you don't know anything and at the end you do know something." (Grade 4)

- "At the end, because you would at least know more than when you started." (Grade 4)

- "At the end, we know more stuff." (Grade 5)

- "At the beginning, because it reminds students about what we have learned last year. I hope we get it again next year." (Grade 5, male)

- "At both times, because at the beginning of the year you can see how much you remember from last year and at the end you can see how much you understood throughout the year." (Grade 6, female)

- "At the end we're more ready to take the test." (Grade 7)

- "At the end of the year, because for some of the kids this is the first year in French. I know there is a kid in my class and its his first year in French. They don't know very much so they'd have to wait until the end of the year to be sure that they can fill it out so they can know what they are saying or asking." (Grade 7, female)

- "In the middle of the year gives you a taste of what you know and then what you wanna do." (Grade 7)

- "To know what you can do at the end helps build confidence in learning a second language." (Grade 7, male)

- "At the beginning, because the teacher can see how skilled the class is." (Grade 7, female)

- *Many students made reference at this level as to the fact that having the questionnaire at both times of the year " shows you where you have improved and how much you have learnt."*

- "At the beginning because then they can determine if you should be taking French or not." (Grade 8, female)

- "At the beginning would be better, because it would let you know how hard you have to work and to see how hard French is." (Grade 8 male)

- "At the beginning, because it would help to build up knowledge." (Grade 8, male)

- "At the end, because it will let you know what you have to know for next year." (Grade 8)

- "At bothtimes, because it would help to learn French better. (Paraphrase, Grade 8, male)

- "At both times, to see how our attitudes have changed towards learning." (Grade 8, male)

- "At the end, because we know more." (Grade 8, male)

- "At both times. To monitor your progress." (Grade 9, female)

- "At both times so you can see how you have improved." (Grade 9, male)

- "At both times, so you can compare. For example, at the beginning you may fill in all e's, but by the end you could see how much you have improved." (Grade 9, female)

- "It should be given at the beginning of the year, because may be they could split up the classes so that they could be better [grouped]." (Grade 9, female)

- "At the beginning, because the teacher can see where [s/he] can help the students." (Grade 9, male)

- "For those students who have never taken French in Grade 10, it is better to have it at the end." (French 10, female)

- "It would help us to know if French is valuable to take." (Paraphrase, French 10, female)

- "Given at both times, it gives an idea of weaknesses and strengths. Knowing my weaknesses, I can work on them, my strengths, I would improve them." (Paraphrase, French 10, female)

- "Both times, because then you could see how someone has improved from the beginning of the year to the end of the year....Yeah, I think a lot of people would like to see how much they did improve and the teachers could use it to see how much they need to improve for what they need to teach." (French 10N, female)

- "At the beginning and at the end, because at the beginning it would have helped a lot of people know where they should go [in terms of levels]." (Paraphrase, French 10N, male - transfered from Immersion)

- "At the end only, so it can help place you in the next level that is most appropriate for you." (French 20, male)

- "Both times so that it can be used for improvement purposes." (Paraphrase, French 20,female, and French 10,female)

- "The end, because we can answer more things than at the beginning."(Paraphrase, French 20, female)

- "At both times, so that you can see how you have progressed." (French 30, female)

- "At the beginning, because it would help the teacher know what the students are able to do." (French 30)

- "Both times allows for a comparison between the beginning and the end." (French 30, female)

Question 5

Number of comments: 47

- "Bad, because I can't say anything. I'd like to learn more, may be the test would help." (Grade 4)

- "It made me feel good because I can speak another language, but bad because I couldn't answer a lot of the questions. (Grade 4, female)

- "It made me feel bad because there were some questions I didn't understand." (Grade 4, male)

- "Yeah, you feel good when you find out how much you've learnt compared to when you think of a page that you are doing in your French workbook and then you think you couldn't have done that at all at the beginning of the year." (Grade 4)

- "Kind a good and kind a bad, because I realized I couldn't do some things." (Grade 5, female)

- "Good. I found it fun and I liked the idea." (Grade 5)

- "Good. Because it's over." (Grade 5)

- "Good. Told me I could some things in French." (Grade 5)
- "Good because I could do some things, bad because I thought

I could do more than I thought I could. " (Grade 5, male)

- "I felt good because then I'd know what I had to work on." (Grade 5, female)
- "Kind a both. It told me what I should learn and what sort of help I need." (Grade 5, male)
- "It helped me remember about some of the words that I had forgotten." (Grade 5, male)
- "It made me feel good that I knew another language." (Grade 5, male)
- "Kind a good and kind a bad, because I realized I couldn't do some things." (Grade 5, female)
- "Good. It made you think about the things you could do." (Grade 6)
- "In between sort of, because ... I didn't know some of the stuff on it. Like I had to think about if it was in French if I would know it." *"Did you find that hard to do ?"* "Yes." (Grade 6, female)
- "I felt good because I tried my hardest." (Grade 6)
- "A questionnaire like this helps students improve their French." (Grade 6)
- "I felt good because I didn't know I knew that much." (Grade 6, male)
- "Good because I found out what I knew." (Grade 6)
- "Good about knowing another language. It makes you feel good about yourself." (Grade 7, female)
- "I never realized what I could do until I took a test like that." (Grade 7, female)

- "I felt badly because I thought other people were better than me." (Grade 7, female, six years in French, instead of four)

- "I feel bad, because my brother is in a French Immersion program and he is much better at French. I don't like French. I'm not going to take it next year." (Grade 7, female)

- "It made me feel bad because I didn't know very much." (Grade 8, female)

- "It tells you what you are good at and you feel good, but what you don't know makes you feel bad." (Grade 8, female)

- "I felt badly when there were parts I couldn't understand and good about things I could do. " (Grade 8 male, stated also by a Grade 8, female)

- "Bad, because it made me realize how bad I am in French." (Grade 8, female)

- "Kind of bad, because I don't know anything in French." (Grade 8, female)

- "I felt bad because I am lowsy at French." (Grade 9, female)

- "Bad because it made me feel like I could not survive in Quebec." (Grade 9, female)

- "Well, I've been taking it [French] since Grade 4 and ... I was reading through it and stuff and ... I really couldn't do half of the things there was on it....mostly I couldn't say anything at all. So it was like you've been sitting through class all this time and you couldn't do all this.... The teachers are saying 'Oh yeah, you'll be able to do this at the end of the year' and ...you can't.... Yeah, I thought I could do more, but when you read it on paper in English, I can't do half the stuff on the questionnaire." (Grade 9, female)
- "It made me feel bad, but it did not discourage me." (Grade 9, female)

- "When I was in my French school I would have been able to fill in all A's, but I find my French getting worse since I've been in an English school." (Grade 9, female)

- "Good. It told me there were a lot of things I couldn't do, but there were some things I could do." (French 10, female)

- "Bad, because I can only write it... I don't have a lot of confidence in speaking or listening to it... I'm afraid of making a mistake and people laughing at me. (French 10, female)

- "Bad in that I realized how much trouble I'd have in a French speaking country or province." (French 10, female)

- "It made me realize what I could do and what I couldn't do and I thought well 'O.K. This is where I have to brush up on.' It was good for our own knowledge,... because some things we take for granted." (French 10, female)

- "Good, because I know what to study in French. I found it [the questionnaire] was good." (French 10, male)

- "Good, because it showed me I had to improve." (French 10N)

- "The words I don't know, didn't make me feel that great. And the parts that I did know and I could answer, I answered with confidence." (French 20, female)

- "Makes you want to do more because you haven't learnt it yet." (Paraphrase)...like read more about things like Acid Rain in both languages." (French 20, male)

- "Good because I'm learning a second language, bad because I know I can't use it." (French 20, female)

- "Both. Some questions I thought 'I really know what I'm doing and other parts I thought 'Oh no'. I felt like such a loser, because I didn't know what it was talking about."

(French 20, female with 9 years of French)

- "It made me feel good, because I realized I could actually do more than I thought I could." (French 20, female)

- "I didn't have any answers where I completely didn't understand. Usually you would be above that. I had some understanding of all the cases. No, I felt comfortable with it [the questionnaire]." (French 30, female)

- "It made me think a little bit about what I am able to do. It made me work harder." (French 30N)

Other comments relating to the questionnaire

Number of comments: 40

- "It's a good idea, because it gives students a feeling about how their French is and gives them a chance to test their ability." (Grade 5, female)

- "It tells you about what that person knows in French. The questionnaire was fun. " (Grade 5, female)

- "It [the questionnaire] really did help me figure out where I really need to improve in French." (Grade 6, male)

- "I don't think a test is necessary, because you'll know from your marks what you know." (Grade 6, male)

- "It's good for people who don't know French to see what they do know. It helps 'perk you up'." (Grade 6, male)

- "It's a good idea because it gives people an opportunity to express themselves as they know... where they need to improve and how they need to improve." (Grade 7, female)

- "The questionnaire helps people understand what problems they are having in French and the things they're doing good in." "...I think the questionnaire is good and I hope to get it again." (Paraphrase) (Grade 7, male)

- "It was an understanding questionnaire and I think it should be given every year. " (Grade 7, male)

- "I found the questionnaire interesting." (Grade 7, female)

- "I liked it [the questionnaire] when I took it." (Grade 7, male)

- "It's a good idea, because it can help to make changes." (Grade 7, male)

- "I think it is a good idea to have it [the questionnaire]." (Grade 7, female)

- "I think it was pretty good, even though it is hard. But it's good to have. " (Grade 8, male)

- "It could help out the school in what things they need to improve in for students who don't know as much." (Grade 8, female)

- "I thought it was pretty good except for the question on Acid Rain." (Grade 8, female)

- "It was pretty good. It was a nice length. It wasn't too overdrawn or just too short. Some of the questions were a bit vague." (Grade 8, male)

- "It's a good idea." (Grade 8, female)

- "They should ask if you are learning another language." (Grade 8, female studying German after school)

- "I thought it was pretty interesting that some of the questions they were asking really made you think. You don't really think about this kind of stuff everyday. You just turn on the radio and whatever it is you just listen to it. You just turn on the T.V. and just watch whatever is on T.V. You don't really think about this. Maybe you should have had some of the questions in French, because I was just thinking in English. I wasn't thinking it was in French at all. It was hard to think in French when I was reading in English." (Grade 8, male)

- "I thought the questionnaire was very well put together." (Grade 9, male)

- "I thought the questions were 'neat'....We had done some of the situations in plays and they helped me to think of a similar occasion we've done in class and it made me think 'Oh yeah, I have done something similar." (Grade 9,female)

- "Maybe they could have had a few French sentences [on the questionnaire]." (Grade 9, male)

- "I thought it was very interesting." (Grade 9, male)

- "Yes, by having a situation where you'd be able to use French would help the French program. "(Paraphrase, French 10, female)

- "...The questionnaire was fun. it taught me a little bit." (French 10, female)

- "It was really good." (French 10, male)

- "I think that it would be good for you to see for your personal knowledge." (French 10)

- "I found it interesting...different from what we do in class. It was good." (French 10, female)

- "It's good to have a test like this." (French 10, male)

- "I thought it was a good idea and should be given a lot so you can see your progress. " (French 10N, female)
- "I thought it covered all the different areas very well. I didn't just have one section." (French 10N, male)

- "There were a lot of situations where I would like to be able to understand and talk and stuff and I didn't know any way or the vocabulary. It made me realize I have a lot to learn." (French 10N, female)

- "I think it's pretty good and its a good idea to take them [the questionnaire] out to the schools." " I wouldn't mind doing it again." (Paraphrase) (French 20, female)

- "The questionnaire can show you how you can pay more attention in class." (Paraphrase, French 20, male)

- "It was pretty good. It showed you what you could do if you were adept at [learning] French. If you really knew what you were doing you could really go far according to it. But if you didn't know what you were doing you would need to take quite a bit more for converstations and describing certain things and stuff." (French 20, male) *He thought the questionnaire served a purpose.*

- "It shouldn't be given every year, because you won't be able to see as much progress." (French 20, female)

- "I think it was a good questionnaire even though I don't know a lot of French." (French 20, female)

- "The test did not test the same way as the things taught in class. Some of the topics we haven't really talked about in French class." (French 20, male)

- "The one we were given was a good questionnaire." (French 20, female)

- "As far a I can see I thought it was fairly well done." (French 30, male)